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**Integrated and coordinated implementation of and follow-up to major
United Nations conferences and summits**

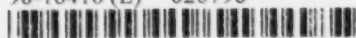
Implementation of the agreed conclusions of the 1997 coordination segment of the Economic and Social Council on mainstreaming the gender perspective into all policies and programmes of the United Nations system

Report of the Secretary-General

I. Introduction

1. The present report aims to provide the Economic and Social Council with the status of the follow-up activities requested by the Council in its agreed conclusions 1997/2 on mainstreaming the gender perspective into all policies and programmes in the United Nations system¹ so that the Council may take any further action necessary to ensure a full implementation of those conclusions.
2. Follow-up activities related to operational activities are addressed in the report of the Secretary-General entitled: "Advancement of women: implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action and the role of operational activities in promoting, in particular, capacity-building and resource mobilization for enhancing the participation of women in development" (E/1998/54). Other related reports before the Council are the report on the mid-term review of the system-wide medium-term plan for the advancement of women, 1996-2001 (E/CN.6/1998/3); and the report on follow-up to and implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action (E/1998/53).
3. The status of follow-up to agreed conclusions 1997/2 is set out in section II below in a dual column layout: the left-hand column contains the provisions of agreed conclusions 1997/2 that call for action; the right-hand column presents the status of follow-up corresponding to each action-oriented paragraph. The report concludes with a number of recommendations.

* E/1998/100



II. Status of follow-up to agreed conclusions 1997/2 of the Economic and Social Council

Provisions of agreed conclusions 1997/2

Implementation

A. The intergovernmental process of the United Nations

The Council encourages the General Assembly to direct all of its committees and bodies and draw the attention of other bodies of the United Nations system to the need to mainstream a gender perspective systematically into all areas of their work, in particular in such areas as macroeconomic questions, operational activities for development, poverty eradication, human rights, humanitarian assistance, budgeting, disarmament, peace and security, and legal and political matters, taking full advantage of the outcome of the work of the Commission on the Status of Women.

The President of the Economic and Social Council, in a letter dated 23 September 1997 to the President of the General Assembly, asked that the attention of the Chairpersons of the Main Committees be drawn to the agreed conclusions and that the recommendations of the Council be given due consideration.

The General Assembly, in its resolution 52/100 of 12 December 1997, welcomed the adoption by the Council of agreed conclusions 1997/2, and endorsed the definition, set of principles and specific recommendations for gender mainstreaming that they contained. It directed its committees and other bodies to mainstream the gender perspective systematically into all areas of their work, and requested the Secretariat to present issues and approaches in a gender-sensitive manner when preparing reports so as to provide the intergovernmental machinery with an analytical basis for gender-responsive policy formulation. It requested the Council to ensure that gender mainstreaming would be an integral part of all its activities concerning integrated follow-up to recent United Nations conferences, building upon its agreed conclusions 1997/2.

All bodies that deal with programme and budgetary matters, including the Committee for Programme and Coordination, should ensure that all programmes visibly mainstream a gender perspective.

The Committee for Programme and Coordination, at its thirty-sixth session, had agreed to ensure that the mainstreaming of a gender perspective was reflected in the individual programmes of the system-wide medium-term plan for the advancement of women, 1996-2001. The Committee, at its thirty-eighth session in June 1998, reviewed the progress report on the medium-term plan.

Other intergovernmental bodies with similar responsibilities in the United Nations system – for instance, the governing bodies of the United Nations Development Programme/United Nations Population Fund (UNDP/UNFPA), the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), the World Food Programme (WFP), the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), the Programme of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and the specialized agencies – are encouraged to monitor the way in which the concerned agencies, funds

Various governing bodies of specialized agencies, funds and programmes have taken into consideration elements of the gender perspective in their planning and programming, as follows:

(a) Gender, population and development is a cross-cutting theme in all UNFPA programmes and activities. Before approval, all programmes are reviewed on the extent to which they incorporate a gender perspective. Regular evaluations are conducted. A current initiative to revise UNFPA's budgetary classification system for programmatic and technical operational

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and programmes implement gender mainstreaming in their respective medium-term plans and programme budgets, including at the field level.	activities takes into account the multidimensional aspects of gender, population and development to facilitate the monitoring of the financial support for gender mainstreaming; (b) An intergovernmental mid-term review in 1998 by the UNCTAD/Trade and Development Board of the implementation of decisions made by UNCTAD at its ninth session will assess achievement of objectives, including the integration of gender as a cross-sectoral issue. The programme budget of the International Trade Centre-UNCTAD/World Trade Organization (WTO) contains specific gender-related programmes and outputs; (c) Greater attention to accountability, coordination and monitoring mechanisms for gender mainstreaming will be an integral part of UNICEF's new medium-term plan; (d) Women are recognized as a priority group in the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) Medium-Term Strategy 1990-2001, which includes 10 special projects on women and girls, including women's role in a culture for peace; (e) The Women in Development Plan of Action of 1995, adopted by the FAO Conference at its twenty-eighth session, in November 1995, constitutes a global framework with specific and clearly identified contributions from all technical divisions. The FAO Advisory Committee on Women coordinates and monitors implementation, with detailed progress reports submitted to each session of the Conference; The Inter-Agency Committee on Women and Gender Equality (IACWGE) noted that greater efforts needed to be made so that programme budgets are prepared in a way that clearly reflect a gender perspective. To that end, the Committee recommended that the Administrative Committee on Coordination (ACC) invite each United Nations agency to examine and – if necessary – to consider revising its classification system, budget codes and financial monitoring system to systematically and explicitly account for and track budget allocations and expenditures to gender mainstreaming and women-in-development programmes. IACWGE itself is continuing its work on budget codes and tracking of financial expenditures.

<i>Provisions of agreed conclusions 1997/2</i>	<i>Implementation</i>
The Council will take steps to strengthen its harmonization and coordination of the work programmes of the functional commissions, as well as the interaction between the Council, the functional commissions and other subsidiary bodies, to accelerate gender mainstreaming. To this end, the Council entrusts its bureau with establishing or strengthening a dialogue with the chairpersons and bureaux of those bodies, as well as a dialogue between them, with the active support of the Chairperson and Bureau of the Commission on the Status of Women.	The President of the Council transmitted agreed conclusions 1997/2 to the Chairpersons of the functional commissions in a letter dated 5 December 1997, and sought their active cooperation and support in implementing the Council's recommendations. The Bureau of the Council subsequently met with the Bureaux of four functional commissions (Commission on Population and Development, Commission for Social Development, Commission on the Status of Women and Commission on Sustainable Development) to discuss agreed conclusions 1997/2, including how to implement mainstreaming a gender perspective in the work of intergovernmental bodies within their respective areas of responsibility. To assist the Council in its role of ensuring harmonization and coordination of the work programmes of the functional commissions, a consolidated report on the outcomes of subsidiary bodies will be before the Council.
The Council calls upon all of its functional commissions and subsidiary bodies to mainstream a gender perspective in their work, and in this regard:	During their recent sessions, several functional commissions have either continued to address gender issues or dealt with a particular issue from a gender perspective or both. A summary of such activities is contained in the report of the Secretary-General on follow-up to and implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action (E/1998/53). New initiatives based specifically on the agreed conclusions include the decision of the Commission on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice to mainstream a gender perspective into all its activities and to request the Secretariat to integrate a gender perspective into all activities of the Centre for International Crime Prevention. The Statistical Commission's Working Group on International Statistical Programmes and Coordination, at its nineteenth session, in February 1998, adopted a statement on follow-up to the agreed conclusions. The Commission on Human Rights encouraged the High Commissioner for Human Rights, in collaboration with the Division for the Advancement of Women, to elaborate a gender mission statement and strategies for effectively implementing the agreed conclusions.
(a) To adopt, as a first step, an explicit decision on mainstreaming a gender perspective in their work;	The report of the Secretary-General on integrated and coordinated implementation and follow-up of major United Nations conferences and summits submitted to the Council at its session on that topic in May 1998 made recommendations on how to ensure exchange of inputs among the functional commissions on cross-cutting issues, including gender, in the monitoring and review of global conferences (see E/1998/19, paras. 18 (ii) and 28 (iii) and (vii)).
(b) To make maximum use of the agreed conclusions of the Commission on the Status of Women on the 12 critical areas of concern² when monitoring implementation of global conferences;	
(c) To take into account the work of the Commission on the Status of Women and the Commission on Human Rights in the area of enjoyment of human rights by women.	

<i>Provisions of agreed conclusions 1997/2</i>	<i>Implementation</i>
	The outcome of the discussions in the Commission on the Status of Women on the enjoyment of human rights by women was made available to the Commission on Human Rights at its fifty-fourth session, in 1998, in accordance with General Assembly resolution 52/99. The Chairperson of the Commission on the Status of Women addressed the Commission on Human Rights, along with the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights and the Special Rapporteur on violence against women. The need to strengthen the links between the activities of the Commission on Human Rights and the Commission on the Status of Women was discussed.
The Commission on the Status of Women is urged:	
(a) To provide suggestions to other functional commissions and the Council on gender mainstreaming;	The Chairperson of the Commission on the Status of Women, in a letter dated 9 February 1998 to the President of the Council, made a number of valuable suggestions. For example, the functional commissions, through their Chairpersons, could be encouraged to: (a) Request their secretariats to ensure that all reports present issues and approaches in a gender-sensitive manner so as to provide the intergovernmental machinery with an analytical basis for gender-responsive policy formulation. They might also request their secretariats to prepare reports highlighting the major gender implications as they arise from the work covered by the respective commissions; (b) Ascertain the steps taken by their respective secretariats to implement agreed conclusions 1997/2, including the existence of sector-specific gender-mainstreaming strategies, the existence of institutional directives, the use of gender-sensitive guidelines and checklists for programming, and the establishment of monitoring and evaluation mechanisms to assess outcomes for women in the sectoral programme; (c) Request their respective secretariats to prepare reports on how best they could implement the agreed conclusions on gender mainstreaming; (d) Ascertain the extent to which a gender perspective is taken into account when reviewing proposed programmes of work and medium-term plans of their secretariats; (e) Assess their role in conference follow-up. I.e., commissions, within their area of responsibility, might wish to ensure that they highlight in their decisions the attention given to gender-mainstreaming as well as to the follow-up to the Fourth World Conference on Women.

*Provisions of agreed conclusions 1997/2**Implementation*

(b) To use the work of other functional commissions as it relates to the 12 critical areas of concern in the Beijing Platform for Action – for example, in 1998, that of the Commission on Human Rights and, in 1999, that of the Commission on Population and Development – in dealing with priority themes.

The elements of these suggestions were discussed when the bureau of the Council met with the bureaus of four functional commissions

A number of reports submitted to the Commission on Human Rights, such as the reports of the Special Rapporteur on violence against women, are made available for information to the Commission on the Status of Women when dealing with relevant issues (see, for example, the documentation listed under item 3 (c) of the provisional agenda of the Commission at its forty-second session). For the 1998 sessions of the Commission on the Status of Women and the Commission on Human Rights, the Division for the Advancement of Women and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights prepared a joint report on women's full enjoyment of their human rights, in particular those relating to the elimination of poverty, economic development and economic resources (E/CN.4/1998/22-E/CN.6/1998/11), which was submitted to the Commission on Human Rights and the Commission on the Status of Women to facilitate consideration of these issues by the two Commissions in a coordinated manner. Both Commissions called for further strengthening of cooperation and coordination between the two Commissions and between the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights and the Division for the Advancement of Women.

The Commission on the Status of Women, in considering the critical area of concern "Women and health" in 1999, is expected to receive inputs from the Commission on Population and Development, with special emphasis on the linkages between health and development, as well as on gender issues and family. Similarly, the Statistical Commission and its secretariat support the work of the Commission on the Status of Women and intergovernmental bodies responsible for statistical development in specialized fields of statistics, such as health, education and employment, to ensure the inclusion of a gender perspective in those fields, as reflected in the various technical publications and statistical database.

Regional commissions are requested to assume a catalytic role in exchanging experiences and best practices as well as promoting cooperation in gender mainstreaming on a regional level.

To this end, the regional commissions have taken action on women's issues and to mainstream a gender perspective into the Commissions' programme of work, as follows:

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(a) The Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) has initiated a process of gender-mainstreaming into all its programmatic and operational activities. In the process of restructuring and redefining its role, gender has been defined as one of the priority areas and a cross-cutting issue within ECA's substantive activities. The following measures have been identified

(i) Placing gender focal points in each of the five substantive divisions, as well as in each of the five subregional development centres,

(ii) Strengthening the African Centre for Women so that it can initiate and advocate the process of mainstreaming gender in all ECA programmes and activities, as well as in national development programmes of member States; the Centre plans to address the process of defining modalities of collaboration with all the substantive divisions and refining indicators that will be used to monitor the effort at gender mainstreaming, in terms of both preparing programmes and allocating resources;

(iii) Convening a number of subregional meetings, including an international conference on the theme "African women and economic development: investing in our future";

(b) The Economic Commission for Europe (ECE) has taken steps to mainstream the gender perspective in its principal subsidiary bodies. Initial intergovernmental discussions have already been held in the areas of human settlements, environment and trade. Support to disaggregate statistics by sex in ECE countries has been provided on a regular basis;

(c) In 1997, the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean designed a gender mainstreaming strategy. All activities that are carried out in the member countries are to include a gender perspective,

(d) The Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) is mainstreaming women's issues through an interdivisional coordinating mechanism to promote mainstreaming and integrating priorities of the Beijing Platform for Action into its work

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	programme. Various divisions are working on such issues as gender statistics, female migration, gender and the emerging trade agenda, women and technology, women in local governance, and women and sanitary water supply. In addition, various studies undertaken by ESCAP have either included special chapters/papers on women or have taken into consideration the impact of policies on women. All programme managers have been tasked with ensuring that gender concerns are incorporated into programmatic and operational activities. ESCAP is developing a strategy and a plan of action to further mainstream a gender perspective into its work programme; (e) A working group on gender mainstreaming in ESCWA's work programme has been established, composed of both women and men. It will propose to ESCWA a work plan for ESCWA to meet the immediate and long-term requirements of gender mainstreaming.
The Secretariat is requested to present issues and approaches in a gender-sensitive manner when preparing reports so as to provide the intergovernmental machinery with an analytical basis for gender-responsive policy formulation and to ensure that the intergovernmental machinery is made aware of the decisions and recommendations of other relevant bodies in relation to gender mainstreaming.	In his letter of 13 October 1997, the Secretary-General transmitted the agreed conclusions for action to all senior officials in the United Nations system.³ He asked that analytical reports and recommendations on policy or operational issues be presented for intergovernmental decision-making in a manner that fully accounts for gender differences. The Division for the Advancement of Women has continued to provide comments and inputs to reports prepared by other parts of the United Nations Secretariat in an effort to strengthen attention to gender issues. Emphasis is placed on providing input at an early stage of the research and drafting process so that gender considerations may influence the approach taken in a report.
Under an item entitled "Integrated follow-up of major United Nations conferences", the Council will monitor annually the way in which its functional commissions and subsidiary bodies mainstream a gender perspective on the basis of the report on the follow-up to the Fourth World Conference on Women.	The provision is being implemented as of 1998. It should be recalled that the report of the Secretary-General on the follow-up to and implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (E/1998/53) addresses activities in the area of advancement of women and gender-mainstreaming by other bodies reporting to the Council and coordination at the inter-agency level.

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<i>B. Institutional requirements for gender mainstreaming in all policies and programmes</i>	
The Council welcomes the Secretary-General's commitment to mainstreaming a gender perspective and encourages him to demand accountability from senior managers for gender mainstreaming, in this regard, the Special Adviser on Gender Issues and Advancement of Women is encouraged to continue to fulfil her important role	The Secretary-General, in his letter of 13 October 1997, stressed that gender mainstreaming was the responsibility of all staff, and emphasized the accountability of senior managers for implementation of the agreed conclusions. Senior managers were invited to take a number of steps, including the formulation of specific strategies for ensuring that gender issues were brought into the mainstream of activities of each senior manager's area of responsibility; the systematic use of gender analysis in the preparation of reports or in operational activities; and the preparation of medium-term plans and programme budgets in such a manner that a gender perspective was apparent. The Special Adviser on Gender Issues and the Advancement of Women followed up on the Secretary-General's letter of 13 October 1997 so as to establish an ongoing exchange with senior managers of the United Nations system on the practical implications of gender mainstreaming, and to facilitate their efforts in this regard. She also held exchanges of view with the Under-Secretaries-General for Political Affairs, Internal Oversight Services, Peacekeeping Operations, Disarmament Affairs, and Economic and Social Affairs and their staff to discuss steps to be taken in order to mainstream a gender perspective in the work of their departments/offices.

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In the ongoing reform process within the United Nations system, <i>inter alia</i> , in the work of the executive committees, the systemic integration of a gender perspective should be ensured.	The Secretary-General, in his letter of 13 October 1997 to the Conveners of the Executive Committees, asked that due consideration be given to gender issues, and that the reports on the work of the Executive Committees include an assessment of progress in the process of gender mainstreaming in the areas falling within the remit of each Committee. The Executive Committee on Economic and Social Affairs established a working group on gender issues and held discussions on gender mainstreaming. It decided to formulate a statement of policy on the commitment of its member entities to adequately cover gender aspects in their reports and to reflect the gender perspective in intergovernmental processes and in the composition of expert groups. The Executive Committee on Humanitarian Affairs has devoted considerable time and attention to gender issues in Afghanistan, to which an inter-agency gender mission was sent under the leadership of the Special Adviser on Gender Issues and Advancement of Women with a view to developing a consistent basis for United Nations activities in that country. The Executive Committee of the United Nations Development Group has established a subgroup on gender. The Executive Committee on Peace and Security is also making efforts to reflect gender in its discussions.
The Council encourages the efforts of the Administrative Committee on Coordination (ACC) to develop a mission statement on gender mainstreaming and trusts that such a statement will send a clear and concrete message to the system and will be applicable system-wide.	The Secretary-General, in his letter of 13 October 1997, had expressed his intention to pursue the need for a systematic approach to gender mainstreaming in ACC. ACC, at its first regular session of 1998, adopted a statement prepared by the Inter-Agency Committee on Women and Gender Equality, entitled "Gender equality and mainstreaming in the work of the United Nations system: a commitment for action". The statement refers to the need to implement the recommendations on gender mainstreaming as elaborated in the agreed conclusions. The Special Adviser, in her capacity as Chairperson of the Inter-agency Committee on Women and Gender Equality, subsequently sent the statement to all senior officials in the United Nations system, encouraging them to give the statement the attention and visibility it deserved.
The heads of the specialized agencies are encouraged to establish accountability of senior managers for gender mainstreaming.	The report of the Secretary-General entitled "Advancement of women: implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action and the role of operational activities in promoting, in particular, capacity-building and resource mobilization for enhancing the participation of women in development" (E/1998/54) addresses the issue of accountability.

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All entities of the United Nations system making full use of the expertise and support of gender units or focal points – the Division for the Advancement of Women of the Secretariat, the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM), the International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women (INSTRAW) and the Inter-Agency Committee on Women and Gender Equality – should institutionalize mainstreaming of a gender perspective at all levels through specific steps, including:	UNFPA has taken specific initiatives: it held a workshop in October 1996 on gender, population and development for headquarters staff and advisers to country support teams and technical support services on how to institutionalize gender, in continuation of that workshop, a week-long consultation was held in September 1997. UNFPA is also formulating a draft conceptual framework and preliminary indicators on gender mainstreaming.
(a) The adoption of gender mainstreaming policies and the formulation of specific mainstreaming strategies for sectoral areas,	UNICEF's mission statement reaffirmed that promotion and protection of equal rights for women and girls and full participation in community life are important objectives of UNICEF. A gender perspective is reflected in education, health, nutrition, water and environmental sanitation.
	A UNDP guidance note on gender mainstreaming, which has been sent to all country offices, spells out the commitment, competencies and accountability measures needed to make gender mainstreaming a reality; the guidance note highlights corporate responsibilities, outlines skill requirements and provides guidance on the programming and management dimensions of gender-mainstreaming.
	At the World Bank, regional gender action plans have been prepared by each of the six regional vice-presidencies, establishing regional priorities and proposing concrete actions and strategies at the national, subregional and regional levels. Performance indicators are being refined to monitor progress in implementing those strategies.
	Several World Health Organization (WHO) programmes have specific strategies to ensure gender-mainstreaming in plans and operational activities; other programmes are in the process of doing so. To promote a systematic integration of a gender dimension across the board, a WHO policy on gender and health will be developed by mid-1998.
	At Habitat, 78 field offices to date have submitted plans setting out their strategies for gender-mainstreaming within their country programmes. It adopted a comprehensive policy paper and action plan entitled "Gendered habitat working with women and men in human settlements development" and is working on the mechanisms for implementing this policy.

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UNCTAD held an internal workshop to discuss ways and means of bringing gender issues into the mainstream of UNCTAD activities and of mainstreaming a gender perspective as a cross-sectoral issue.

UNIDO and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights will consider gender policy and modalities for the implementation of gender mainstreaming.

UNU will pay specific attention to gender-mainstreaming in the framework of developing the University's strategic plan as well as a personnel policy. The agreed conclusions will be used for academic activities, in particular the University's World Institute for Development Economics Research and Institute for New Technologies.

The Department of Political Affairs conducted a workshop/teambuilding exercise for all levels of staff to develop modalities for reflecting a gender perspective in its work. This was followed by a "Town Hall" meeting to discuss the insights gained from the workshop.

The Department of Peacekeeping Operations, in cooperation with the Division for the Advancement of Women, is developing a project on mainstreaming a gender perspective in multidimensional peacekeeping.

(b) The use of institutional directives rather than discretionary guidelines for gender mainstreaming;

Further efforts are required. The report of the Secretary-General entitled "Advancement of women: implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action and the role of operational activities in promoting, in particular, capacity-building and resource mobilization for enhancing the participation of women in development" (E/1998/54) addresses these issues in greater detail.

<i>Provisions of agreed conclusions 1997/2</i>	<i>Implementation</i>
(c) The improvement of tools for gender mainstreaming, such as gender analysis, the use of data disaggregated by sex and age and sector-specific gender surveys, as well as gender-sensitive studies, guidelines and checklists for programming;	UNFPA supports efforts to systematically use gender analysis and to collect data disaggregated by sex FAO's Women and Population Division has undertaken a number of initiatives, including generation and provision of data disaggregated by sex and age, at headquarters and in the field Gender mainstreaming is a cross-sectoral common theme at UNIDO, done through application of gender analysis throughout project cycles Within UNHCR, all branch offices have been encouraged to collect disaggregated data on the sex and age of refugee groups for more efficient planning programmes through the people-oriented planning process, which is a gender analysis framework and takes into account the mainstreaming of gender perspective. UNRISD has ongoing research programmes on gender on the themes: "Technical cooperation and women's lives: integrating gender into development policy" and "Gender, poverty and well-being". Other research programmes also pay attention to gender, such as the war-torn societies project, the grass-roots initiatives and knowledge networks for land reform in developing countries, community perspectives on urban governance, and social development and public policy. UNDP has a research programme, in collaboration with UNRISD, on gender and poverty indicators. ECA's African Centre for Women is preparing a gender analysis kit which will be integrated into its programmes. Its various divisions have begun to disaggregate data by sex. UNICEF, UNEP and WHO are making efforts to improve their collection, dissemination and use of gender analysis and data disaggregated by sex. The Department of Economic and Social Affairs will place greater emphasis on the systematic use of data and information disaggregated by sex and age, and of sector-specific gender surveys and studies in reports prepared by the Department. It is also assessing the extent to which its "flagship reports" can more systematically be informed by gender analysis and include specific information pertinent gender issues.

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(d) The establishment of instruments and mechanisms for monitoring and evaluation;	Further information can be found in the report of the Secretary-General entitled "Advancement of women: implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action and the role of operational activities in promoting, in particular, capacity-building and resource mobilization for enhancing the participation of women in development" (E/1998/54). ⁴
(e) The creation of accountability mechanisms for gender mainstreaming.	
United Nations funds and programmes and specialized agencies should be requested to include an assessment of the steps taken to translate gender mainstreaming into country programmes and projects in their reports to the Council at its operational activities segment. All entities of the United Nations system should institute mechanisms for gender mainstreaming in their planning and programming.	The Council's attention is drawn to the report of the Secretary-General entitled "Advancement of women: implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action and the role of operational activities in promoting, in particular, capacity-building and resource mobilization for enhancing the participation of women in development" (E/1998/54).
The Council will assess the extent to which a gender perspective is being applied through institutional directives for planning and programming, in preparation of the comprehensive review of the system-wide medium-term plan for the advancement of women, 1996-2001.	It will be recalled that the Council, by its resolution 1996/34, decided to undertake, in 1998, a comprehensive mid-term review of the implementation of the revised system-wide medium-term plan for the advancement of women, 1996-2001, including a review of progress made in mainstreaming a gender perspective. The Council's attention is drawn to the report of the Secretary-General on this topic submitted to the Council through the Commission on the Status of Women (E/CN.6/1998/3) and the note by the Secretary-General on the same topic (E/1998/10).
The Inter-Agency Committee on Women and Gender Equality, the Division for the Advancement of Women, INSTRAW and UNIFEM should better coordinate their support and catalytic activities. The annual reports of INSTRAW and UNIFEM should be made available to the Commission on the Status of Women for information.	The Council's attention is drawn to the report of the Secretary-General entitled "Advancement of women: implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action and the role of operational activities in promoting, in particular, capacity-building and resource mobilization for enhancing the participation of women in development" (E/1998/54).
<i>C. The role of gender units and focal points in gender mainstreaming</i>	
The location, seniority level, resources and participation of gender units/focal points are crucial. The role of such gender specialists should be strengthened.	The role of gender units and focal points in gender mainstreaming is discussed in detail in the report of the Secretary-General entitled "Advancement of women: implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action and the role of operational activities in promoting, in particular, capacity-building and resource mobilization for enhancing the participation of women in development" (E/1998/54). The Inter-Agency Committee on Women and Gender Equality is conducting a review of the women-in-development/gender focal point function in the United Nations system, with UNEFPA serving as the task manager.

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<i>D. Capacity-building for gender mainstreaming</i>	
To enhance system-wide gender sensitivity and gender expertise through training all entities of the United Nations system should	Many United Nations entities continue to train their staff in the use of gender analysis, and several have stepped up their efforts. The reports of the Secretary-General on the mid-term review of the implementation of the system-wide medium-term plan for the advancement of women, 1996-2001 (E/CN.6/1998/3) and entitled "Advancement of women: implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action and the role of operational activities in promoting, in particular, capacity-building and resource mobilization for enhancing the participation of women in development (E/1998/54) contain further details. ⁵
(a) Integrate a gender perspective into all training programmes,	The Inter-Agency Committee on Women and Gender Equality is compiling an inventory/database of all gender training materials and instruments in use in the United Nations system, with UNICEF and INSTRAW serving as task managers.
(b) Provide continuous gender training for all staff,	Although the Inter-Agency Committee on Women and Gender Equality is compiling an inventory/database, further efforts are needed for a system-wide evaluation of the impact of gender-training
(c) Coordinate their training efforts through a system-wide evaluation of the impact of gender-training. The relevant agencies, funds and programmes of the United Nations system should consider making arrangements and, if necessary, drawing up additional protocols to existing memoranda of understanding	The Inter-Agency Committee on Women and Gender Equality, at its 1997 meeting, initiated efforts on the development of gender-sensitive indicators. The Committee, at its third session, in February 1998, recommended that United Nations system entities, both individually and collectively through the Committee, should closely monitor progress and, if necessary, provide inputs into ACC statistical work, the application of the United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF) list of indicators for common country assessments and other initiatives endorsed by the Statistical Commission to ensure that gender equality issues are fully addressed.
To strengthen capacities for the collection, evaluation and exchange of gender-related information, a coordinated, system-wide effort under the leadership of the main coordinators for specific areas is needed for the development and systematic usage of, <i>inter alia</i>	The United Nations Statistics Division contributes to the gender mainstreaming effort by its programme on gender statistics, which has produced two editions of the publication <i>The World's Women: Trends and Statistics</i> , a handbook for producing national statistical reports on women and men, an operational guide for national statistical offices and gender programmes, and the Women's Statistics and Indicators Database. ⁶ The Division, with the support of UNFPA, has also been working to disseminate gender statistics in more timely and user-oriented formats, and has worked with UNDP to improve statistics on paid and unpaid
(a) Gender-disaggregated statistics and indicators	

<i>Provisions of agreed conclusions 1997/2</i>	<i>Implementation</i>
It is recommended that the General Assembly and the Commission on the Status of Women be regularly provided with statistics on the number and percentage of women at all levels throughout the whole United Nations system. The ACC Consultative Committee on Administrative Questions and the International Civil Service Commission should monitor progress in staffing policies aimed at achieving gender balance.	work. It is also developing an international classification of activities for time-use statistics that will be relevant to a range of socio-economic statistics, including gender statistics. Those work elements create a statistical information support system for mainstreaming a gender perspective into all policies and programmes in the United Nations system. The Population Division's work on demographic issues, migration and maternal mortality exemplifies its consistent attention to the gender dimension. Further efforts are needed, in particular on the development and usage of non-numerical indicators to monitor gender-mainstreaming. IACWGE is continuing its work in this area. Other United Nations organizations have also been making progress in the area of gender-related information. For 1998, UNESCO published a gender equality information kit on the rights of women and girls. The knowledge management system of the World Bank contains a gender component. In several UNICEF country programmes, the multiple indicator cluster surveys used to monitor progress towards the goals of the World Summit for Children have introduced the collection of data disaggregated by sex and age.
Capacity-building also requires the collection and sharing of best practices and lessons learned within the United Nations system and at the national level.	The General Assembly, in its resolution 52/96 on improvement of the status of women in the Secretariat, reiterated this request. Preparations are under way to provide this information to the Assembly at its fifty-third session, by using information collected and assembled by the Consultative Committee on Administrative Questions. A comprehensive report on gender balance in the United Nations system was discussed by the International Civil Service Commission at its forty-seventh session (20 April to 15 May 1998).
(a) The Inter-Agency Committee on Women and Gender Equality is encouraged to develop a standardized format for documenting and assessing gender-mainstreaming experiences in all areas of work; (b) The practice of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women should serve as a good example;	The report of the Secretary-General entitled "Advancement of women: implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action and the role of operational activities in promoting, in particular, capacity-building and resource mobilization for enhancing the role of women in development" (E/1998/54) addresses the issue of capacity-building in detail. The Inter-Agency Committee on Women and Gender Equality, at its third session, in implementing the Beijing Platform for Action and gender mainstreaming, adopted guidelines for good practices (ACC/1998/3, annex V). A time-line was agreed for their compilation, and UNIFEM, in cooperation with UNDP, has been designated task manager.

<i>Provisions of agreed conclusions 1997/2</i>	<i>Implementation</i>
(c) At the field level, United Nations operational entities ... should develop and share memoranda of understanding on gender equality goals.	The Division for the Advancement of Women of the United Nations Secretariat continues to play an active role in generating new ideas, proposing practical suggestions and promoting constructive implementation of gender mainstreaming. It took the lead in organizing a workshop on gender mainstreaming for representatives of the Inter-Agency Committee on Women and Gender Equality and the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development/Development Assistance Committee's Expert Group on Women in Development in September 1997.
Capacity-building further requires recognizing the importance of working with national commissions, national institutions for the advancement of women and non-governmental organizations, in particular women's non-governmental organizations, and developing partnership with them.	The United Nations system has contained to work and develop partnerships with national commissions and institutions for the advancement of women, as well as with non-governmental organizations. For example, ECA is promoting gender equality through building strong partnerships and seeking synergy with African intergovernmental organizations, United Nations bodies, specialized agencies, donor countries, research centres and civil society groups. UNFPA supports non-governmental organizations activities on promotion and legislation regarding women's access to reproductive health care and rights. The Division for the Advancement of Women, in cooperation with ECLAC, is convening an expert group meeting on national machineries for the advancement of women, which will also assess their role, opportunities and challenges in gender mainstreaming, in preparation of the consideration of this critical area of concern by the Commission on the Status of Women in 1999. The Special Adviser transmitted to all members of the Inter-agency Committee on Women and Gender Equality the ACC guidance note for the resident coordinator system on conference follow-up, encouraging them to use the guidance note, in particular at the field level, also to strengthen consultations with non-governmental organizations and with national machinery for the advancement of women. She provided the gender focal points with copies of the directory of national machinery for the advancement of women.

Provisions of agreed conclusions 1997/2	Implementation
Accountability structures for gender mainstreaming need to be introduced or strengthened. In this regard, the Inter-Agency Committee on Women and Gender Equality is encouraged:	The Inter-Agency Committee on Women and Gender Equality is continuing its work on indicators and budget codes to better guide United Nations system institutions to classify, budget and track thematic and cross-thematic allocations of expenditures to gender mainstreaming. This work will take into account and build on the recommendations of the Turin inter-agency workshop on field-level follow-up to global conferences on UNDAF and on other initiatives to coordinate country programming exercises. The Chairperson of IACWGE regularly provides oral briefings to the Commission on the Status of Women on the outcome of the sessions of the Committee, which meets just prior to Commission sessions.
(a) To prepare a catalogue of accountability measures, including performance indicators;	
(b) To establish a baseline for gender mainstreaming performance by identifying a number of core indicators;	
(c) To report regularly thereon, <i>inter alia</i>, to the Commission on the Status of Women	
<i>E. Gender mainstreaming in the integrated follow-up to global United Nations conferences</i>	
In order to facilitate gender mainstreaming in the integrated follow-up, review and appraisal of global United Nations conferences, the Council urges all entities of the United Nations system to:	The three ad hoc ACC task forces on the coordinated follow-up to conferences have highlighted the importance of focusing on gender equality and the empowerment of women for achieving conferences goals. For instance, the guidelines of the Task Force on Basic Social Services for All factor in gender, and the Task Force on Full Employment and Sustainable Livelihoods has reaffirmed the need for a comprehensive countervailing strategy to combat discrimination faced by women, including gender-sensitive social policies, women-specific programmes and a supportive legal and institutional framework. For further detail, see the report of the Secretary-General on integrated and coordinated implementation and follow-up to major United Nations conferences and summits (E/1998/19).
(a) Apply a gender perspective to all conference follow-up and, where appropriate, adjust their implementation activities accordingly, including through targeted, women-specific projects;	
(b) To utilize gender analysis effectively to identify the differential impact of implementation on women and men.	ACC, following its review of the work of the task forces and with its recently adopted statement on gender mainstreaming, has expressed its determination to ensure that gender continues to be mainstreamed in the system's work on coordinated follow-up to conferences. At its second session in 1997, ACC requested its subsidiary machinery, particularly the Inter-Agency Committee on Sustainable Development, the Consultative Committee on Programme and Operational Questions and IACWGE, to further develop and strengthen dialogue and interaction in integrated follow-up to conferences, particularly in the light of the importance of mainstreaming a gender perspective. A discussion on the modalities for strengthening such cooperation took place between the Chairpersons of the Committees during the Council session on integrated conference follow-up in May 1998.

Provisions of agreed conclusions 1997/2	Implementation
The resident coordinator should play a primary role in developing a coherent approach to gender mainstreaming in United Nations activities on conference follow-up at the field level, <i>inter alia</i> , through country strategy notes where these exist.	The reports of the Secretary-General on the coordinated follow-up to conferences (E/1998/19) and entitled "Advancement of women: implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action and the role of operational activities in promoting, in particular, capacity-building and resource mobilization for enhancing the participation of women in development" (E/1998/54) address this issue in detail. The Inter-Agency Committee on Women and Gender Equality, at its third session, noted that the perspective of resident coordinators was essential for strengthening the knowledge base at the field level with regard to implementation of gender-specific conferences recommendations. To that end, the Committee decided to convene a one-day workshop with resident coordinators and agency field staff at its fourth session for an exchange of views on how to strengthen implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action and gender mainstreaming, particularly at the country level.
All United Nations gender experts/focal points at the field level ... should	The report of the Secretary-General entitled "Advancement of women: implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action and the role of operational activities in promoting, in particular, the participation of women in development" (E/1998/54) addresses this issue. The ACC guidance note for the resident coordinator system stresses the importance of holding consultations with and providing support to non-governmental organizations and national machinery for the advancement of women in implementation of conference agendas.
(a) Establish a policy dialogue within sectoral areas ...	
(b) Facilitate linkages between national machineries ... and all non-governmental organizations ...	
Enhanced interaction among the Division for the Advancement of Women, INSTRAW, UNIFEM and national machineries for the advancement of women, such as national commissions, national institutions and all non-governmental organizations ... should be pursue	Cooperation continued between the Division for the Advancement of Women, UNIFEM and INSTRAW on the joint project WomenWatch, a United Nations Internet site on the advancement and empowerment of women.⁶ Plans are under way to expand participation on the site to other United Nations entities to establish a gateway for all gender-related information and activities available in the United Nations system. The Division maintains and regularly updates and distributes a directory of national machinery for the advancement of women as a means of facilitating and increasing interaction between and among United Nations entities and national machineries.

III. Recommendations

4. Less than one year after the adoption of agreed conclusions 1997/2, the implementation of their provisions is still at its initial stage, although various entities of the United Nations system have certainly made some progress. The Council may wish to encourage the United Nations system to take further measures to implement gender mainstreaming as a matter of urgency and at the latest by the time of the five-year review of the Beijing Platform for Action in 2000, as recommended under section II of agreed conclusions 1997/2.

5. The Council may wish to welcome ACC's adoption of a statement on gender equality and mainstreaming in the work of the United Nations system, and to urge that a gender perspective be mainstreamed in all institutions, policies and programmes by implementing the specific recommendations contained in agreed conclusions 1997/2.

6. The Council may wish to note that gender mainstreaming is an ongoing effort to be pursued in tandem by both intergovernmental bodies and their secretariats. It may wish to decide to request the Secretary-General, in his regular annual follow-up report on the Fourth World Conference on Women, to include an assessment of progress made in gender mainstreaming in the light of agreed conclusions 1997/2, to highlight new initiatives, and to identify shortcomings and make proposals on how they could most effectively be addressed.

7. The Council may also wish to invite its functional commissions and subsidiary bodies to adopt the steps proposed by the Chairperson of the Commission on the Status of Women in a letter dated 7 February 1998 to the President of the Council, as noted in section II above.

8. The Council may also wish to decide that its contribution to the review of the World Summit for Social Development will fully reflect a gender perspective, taking into consideration its agreed conclusions 1996/1 on poverty eradication and 1997/2 on gender mainstreaming, and to request that any documentation to be prepared for that purpose provide an adequate basis to that end.

Notes

¹ *Official Records of the General Assembly, Fifty-second session, Supplement No. 3, (A/52/3/Rev.1), chap. IV, sect. A, para. 4.*

² The 12 critical areas of concern are: Women and poverty; Education and training of women; Women and health; Violence against women; Women and armed conflict; Women and the economy; Women in power and decision-making; Institutional mechanisms for the advancement of women; Human rights of women; Women and the media; Women and the environment; and The girl child.

³ The following organizations and bodies have responded to the Secretary-General's letter: United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO), United Nations Research Institute for Social Development (UNRISD), UNFPA, World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO), International Trade Centre (UNCTAD/WTO), Office of Legal Affairs of the United Nations Secretariat, UNESCO, United Nations Centre for Human Settlements (Habitat), UNCTAD, World Bank, United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, World Meteorological Organization (WMO), FAO, UNICEF, United Nations University (UNU), United Nations Office at Vienna, ESCWA, ECA, ESCAP, UNHCR; in addition, follow-up activities have been initiated by the Department of Political Affairs, the Department of Economic and Social Affairs, the Office of Internal Oversight Services, the Department of Peace-keeping Operations and the Department of Disarmament Affairs of the United Nations Secretariat.

⁴ Some organizations have taken steps to implement these provisions: (a) UNIDO will monitor gender mainstreaming from the Director-General's Office; (b) since March 1997, UNFPA missions to 12 countries are being supported to assess the extent to which gender considerations are being effectively mainstreamed; (c) UNESCO is taking steps to introduce accountability at all levels, including among

senior officers and directors, to develop gender training and to introduce briefing sessions for department directors and representatives of member States; (d) the World Bank has established the External World Bank Gender Consultative Group, which meets annually with the President and senior bank management to provide recommendations on the implementation of World Bank gender policies; and (e) UNHCR is seeking to implement more staff and managerial accountability by incorporating gender-related issues in the core managerial and functional competencies of its new career management system

⁵ UNICEF has made measurable progress in developing staff competence and national counterparts in gender analysis and gender-based programming, through training and a network of technical support; training materials and strategies are being updated. UNIDO has conducted a series of gender workshops for staff at headquarters and field levels and additional meetings with operational staff for further implementation. WHO is currently developing a training strategy to strengthen capacity in gender-planning, policy appraisal and impact assessment, and project analysis and evaluation. The World Bank, will launch a greatly expanded gender training programme for staff in early 1998. FAO's major programme on socio-economic and gender analysis aims to train a wide range of stakeholders. UNOV's Human Resources Management Section will offer a series of workshops to enhance gender sensitivity and to provide guidance to those concerned on how to translate the concept of gender mainstreaming into programmatic and operational reality. ECA launched in November 1997 a gender training programme tailored to its specific needs, which is scheduled to address its Cabinet Office, all programme managers, regional advisers and all the staff of the African Centre for Women and Gender Focal Points. ESCAP has made a request to the Office of Human Resources Management of the United Nations Secretariat for gender training for ESCAP; in the interim, ESCAP staff members attend gender training provided by other agencies.

⁶ Country tables from *The World's Women 1995*, updated yearly, are now available on the World Wide Web site of the United Nations Statistics Division (www.un.org/Depts/unsd/gender/intro.htm); an expanded and updated version of the Women's Indicators and Statistics Database is being prepared for release in early 1999.

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Regional cooperation

Regional cooperation in the economic, social and related fields**Report of the Secretary-General****The regional commissions in the context of a programme for reform of the United Nations****A. Introductory remarks**

1. Both the Secretariat and the intergovernmental machinery of the United Nations have been concerned in bringing the regional commissions fully into the reform process. In response to General Assembly resolution 50/227 of 24 May 1996 and Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/41 of 26 July 1996, each and every one of the regional commissions, with differences in content and scope, has carried out reforms aimed at achieving greater relevance, efficiency and effectiveness.¹ The individual reviews of these reforms, which were debated by the Council at its substantive session of 1997,² were basically driven by the intergovernmental machinery at the regional level (that is to say the commissions) and by the senior levels of their respective secretariats.

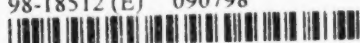
2. On the other hand, the programme of the Secretary-General for reform of the United Nations invites the Economic and Social Council to explore the role of the

regional commissions not only from the perspective of their individual contributions to their regions, but also from the vantage point of the overall activities of the United Nations. For this reason, and as a complement to the individual reviews referred to above, the Secretary-General recommended to the Council that it initiate a general review of the regional commissions.³ The present report purports to assist the Council in responding to his recommendation, especially during the next 12 months.

B. The main issues

3. It is important to recognize that, in effect, the regional commissions play a double role. On the one hand, as regional outposts of the United Nations, they carry out certain functions so as to contribute to the Organization's global work programme. On the other hand, as the regional expressions of the United Nations, they occupy a niche in the institutional landscape of their respective geographical

¹ E/1998/100.



areas. At the programmatic level, the division of specific outputs corresponding to either of these two activities is sometimes blurred, but tends to complement the dual role of the regional commissions.

4. Most simply expressed, the role of the regional commissions as part of the broader United Nations requires a more focused distribution of tasks among Headquarters, regional and national activities being carried out by the United Nations, based on the comparative advantages of each of these geographical expressions of the Organization. Hence, the call of the Secretary-General for "the most appropriate division of labour". Developing criteria on how to characterize the "comparative advantages" of each part of the Organization (cost-effectiveness, core competencies, historical heritage, organizational consideration) is one of the challenges facing both Governments and the Secretariat in respect of making the United Nations more effective and efficient.

5. Another question that will come up in the quest to determine core responsibilities based on geographical criteria (global, regional, national) relates to the type of activities, distributed between normative tasks (analytical and norm-setting functions) and operational activities (technical assistance, project execution, training). In fact, the interdisciplinary, multisectoral approach of the regional commissions falls within both the Organization's "economic and social affairs" and its "development cooperation". Indeed, the regional commissions' normative tasks are rooted in their operational activities, and vice versa, thus establishing a mutually reinforcing link between them. This fact only highlights the need for close interaction between the regional commissions and the rest of the system.

6. In the same vein, the role of the regional commissions as part of the institutional landscape of their respective geographical areas requires close cooperation between the regional commissions and other regional bodies in order to reinforce synergies, as well as to avoid or at least lessen overlapping and duplication. This is especially true where the regional commissions and other regional bodies serve essentially the same grouping of member Governments.

7. Tackling these issues requires actions both at the Secretariat and at the intergovernmental level. There is, in effect, a certain parallelism in defining the relations:

(a) Within the Secretariat, between Headquarters and the regional commissions (basically involving the extent to which the Secretary-General delegates functions to the executive secretaries);

(b) Between the Economic and Social Council and the regional intergovernmental forums (the commissions).

These are all complex issues, which should be dealt with progressively as part of a process of change and adaptation.

8. If the member States of the Economic and Social Council accept the proposition that the regional commissions have two separate and distinguishable roles, there are additional conceptual problems that need to be resolved. First, even the part of the regional commissions' work programme that can be relatively self-contained and defined by the commissions themselves needs to respond to the guidelines and policies of the United Nations. Thus, the Council might wish to further clarify the way it interacts with the commissions and the scope of the latter's responsibilities, in order to fulfil its obligation of providing overall guidance and coordination. Second, some understanding should be reached regarding the desirable mix of activities under each of the two roles mentioned above, concerning whether that mix should change over time (and, if so, in what direction), and whether it should vary from one commission to another.

C. The regional commissions as part of the global activities of the United Nations

9. Seen from the vantage point of the overall activities of the United Nations, the regional commissions can play an important role not only as suppliers of inputs to the global work programme, but also as links between national and global activities. Indeed, many of the Organization's functions and activities cannot be carried out in each country owing to a lack of critical mass on the Organization's part at the national level; but often it is neither practical nor cost-effective to try to carry out those functions and activities from a centralized headquarters.

10. For example, regional activities – and the regional commissions – offer the possibility of greatly improving the overall effectiveness and efficiency of the United Nations in carrying out certain tasks. These tasks appear to include, within their geographical jurisdiction, the collecting, ordering and interpreting of statistics and indicators; the provision of selected technical assistance activities; analytical work that draws on national and regional empirical observations, and that generates inputs to the Organization's overall capacity to "produce ideas"; and the capacity to convene Governments and non-governmental personalities. The regional commissions are also an important mechanism

for articulating regional perspectives on global issues, and should use their convening power to this effect.

11. The opportunity of bringing the activities of the regional commissions more closely within the compass of the overall activities of the United Nations in the economic and social sectors should be greatly enhanced by their active participation in the Executive Committee for Economic and Social Affairs and in the United Nations Development Group, a decision that has already been implemented. The Secretary-General further proposes carrying out joint exercises, between each commission and the Department of Economic and Social Affairs as well as the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), outlining the inputs that the commissions would be expected to provide to global programmes and the support the Department of Economic and Social Affairs and UNCTAD would be expected to provide to each commission during a predetermined period. These exercises will take the form of letters of understanding, which should be further reflected in the programming and budgeting of each of the departments concerned.

12. In light of the above, more work is clearly needed within the Secretariat to define "who does what", based not on *presumed* but on *real and proved* comparative advantages both in functional categories (research, information-gathering, technical assistance, norm-setting, the advocacy role) and in subject categories (trade, technology, social issues, economic policy-making, sustainable development, governance). The Secretary-General has asked the Deputy Secretary-General to continue building on the existing reviews to identify the proved comparative advantages of each of the component parts of the Secretariat, in order to obtain the most and best-quality outputs at the least cost.

13. The Secretary-General believes that the intergovernmental machinery, especially the Economic and Social Council, also has an important role to play in clarifying what the core functions of the regional commissions should be. In a real sense, these functions are, at least partially, supply-driven, since they reflect, among other aspects, the stock of expertise that has been developed over the years in each secretariat of the regional commissions. However, the fundamental consideration has been, and should continue to be, the region's perceived needs, as reflected in the demands of member Governments. The ongoing exercises in some of the regional commissions on priority-setting are a step in the right direction, not only towards more useful outputs, but also towards developing activities that would lead to a rational division of labour between the regional commissions and the Secretariat at the global level.

D. The regional commissions as part of their respective regional institutional landscapes

14. In the judgement of the Secretary-General, a strong case can be made for maintaining a regional expression in the overall activities of the United Nations. Regional cooperation within the United Nations system can be defended on its own merits, as well as on the basis of its being a potentially important building block contributing towards the Organization's central role of promoting development and international cooperation.

15. Furthermore, regional activities – and the regional commissions – can greatly assist the Organization in integrating topics in the economic, social and political spheres (including in post-conflict peace-building situations), and in "building bridges" between economic and social policy makers. In effect, the regional commissions deal with a broad spectrum of both public and private agents, and can thereby play a useful role in one of the core activities of any intergovernmental secretariat: interaction with its member Governments.

16. On the other hand, the United Nations must improve coordination of the activities of the regional commissions with other regional activities within the United Nations system proper, as well as with non-United Nations regional and subregional bodies. Indeed, the relation between the regional commissions and the Organization's regional activities deserves especially close attention. In the past, the regional commissions have tried to exercise "team leadership and responsibility for coordination and cooperation ... of the relevant economic and social activities of the United Nations system in their respective regions" as called for by the General Assembly in the annex to its resolution 32/197 (para. 20). In more recent times, an effort of coordination was made at the regional level, replicating some of the characteristics of the Administrative Committee on Coordination (ACC). These efforts have been promising, but not entirely satisfactory. The main issue seems to centre around the relation between the entities that profess to "coordinate" and those that are supposed to be "coordinated".

17. The Secretary-General strongly believes, however, that the Organization should persevere in these efforts. Without calling into question the team leadership role that the General Assembly in its resolution 32/197 bestowed on the regional commissions, he would nevertheless like to place the coordination effort at the regional level directly under his aegis. The Secretary-General will request the Deputy

Secretary-General to convene yearly meetings, in each geographical area, between the regional commissions and all United Nations funds and programmes, agencies and departments engaged in regional and intercountry activities. These meetings would be designed to effect the exchange of information and promote joint action in order to reinforce synergies and avoid overlapping. When warranted, the Secretary-General will delegate the chairmanship of such meetings to other senior officials, including the executive secretaries of the regional commissions. Follow-up activities will further be pursued in the Executive Committee for Economic and Social Affairs and in the United Nations Development Group.

18. The need to improve coordination of the activities of the regional commissions with other regional activities within the United Nations system proper has a special dimension as regards the activities of the regional commissions, on the one hand, and the regional activities of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), on the other. In spite of consultations between the regional commissions and UNDP on preparation of the Regional Cooperation Framework and an ongoing policy dialogue, and in spite of the approval of joint key flagship projects in each region in the past two years, there still is room for greater complementarity in carrying out these types of activities.

19. This question should be further dealt with through four concrete measures. First, ample use should be made of the new machinery of coordination put in place as part of the reform process in order that the different parts of the United Nations may truly work together, regardless of the type of activities they undertake. In this regard, special mention should be made of the Executive Committees, the United Nations Development Group and the functioning of a Senior Management Group. Second, all of these should complement the Task Force created, in June 1994, jointly by UNDP and the regional commissions for the purpose of providing a forum to address issues of common concern, and whose work must be activated. Third, during the programming stages of its regional activities, UNDP should continue to consult closely with the respective regional commission, and regard the regional commissions as a partner in undertaking said activities. Fourth, programming in both UNDP and the regional commissions should maintain the recent trend of a thematic, multisectoral and cross-cutting approach, which will facilitate interaction between them.

20. There is clearly also a role of coordination to be assumed at the level of the intergovernmental machinery so as to reinforce synergies and avoid overlapping between the work programmes of the regional commissions and the regional activities of the development programmes and the

agencies. The Economic and Social Council could perform this important role.

21. Promoting the involvement of the regional commissions in the preparation of the United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF) and the country strategy note (CSN) would call for the regional commissions' more actively making known their specific capacities to provide support to the UNDAF process under the lead role of the United Nations Development Group. The regional commissions could make a particularly valuable contribution to these exercises by bringing to bear upon them the influence of regional perspectives; by sharing experiences on regional best practices in various areas of policy-making and development; and by reinforcing the system's contribution to linking national development to regional cooperation.

22. Regarding the interaction of the regional commissions with other, non-United Nations regional and subregional bodies, the Secretary-General has instructed the executive secretaries to maintain ongoing consultations that would reinforce synergies and lessen duplication of efforts. When possible, joint endeavours should be encouraged, especially where specific mandates exist from both United Nations and non-United Nations intergovernmental bodies, or where the possibilities exist to launch joint pilot projects.⁴ In this context, the regional commissions should also host yearly meetings with non-United Nations regional organizations and, when appropriate, invite them to the meetings contemplated in paragraph 17 above.

23. In responding to the specific needs of the member States of their regions, the regional commissions are guided or inspired not only by the legislative directives of their intergovernmental bodies but also, in some cases, by the agenda articulated by the principal regional political body in the region. Hence, in ascertaining the mix of activities of the regional commissions as part of the institutional landscape of their geographical area, due regard must be paid to the arrangements that have developed over time for the regional commissions to respond to the agenda of principal regional political organs. In this context, coordination between the regional commissions and non-United Nations regional bodies must also be strengthened at the intergovernmental level. The Secretary-General believes that meetings of the bureaux of major regional organizations with the bureaux of the regional commissions could be very useful.

E. The interface between the two envisioned roles

24. There is at least one important role of the regional commissions that could be defined as an interface between their function as providers of inputs to the global work programme and their role as catalysts or facilitators for regional cooperation efforts in their respective geographical areas – namely, their capacity to bring global concerns to their regions, and regional concerns to global forums. Preparatory and follow-up activities to global conferences are part of this interface. However, in more general terms, the regional commissions can contribute to ensuring coherence of – and avoiding contradictions between – regional and global cooperation, as well as make important contributions to interregional cooperation. Here, again, general guidelines emanating from central decision-making forums are indispensable.

25. However, other issues must be dealt with. As stated previously, member Governments must decide how much of the regional commissions' work programme should be relatively self-contained and driven by regional needs, concerns and circumstances. The higher the relative importance of this role vis-à-vis the other role characterized above, the greater the degree of differentiation between each of the regional commissions. This is quite natural, given the different mandates emanating from each of the intergovernmental forums (the commissions) in addition to other features that point in the direction of differentiation: historical heritage, staffing, degree of regional identity, expectations of member Governments, role that other regional bodies are playing and so on. In other words, there is no compelling reason to try to apply the same rigid mold to each of the commissions in terms of its unique contribution to its respective member Governments.

26. Finally, the Secretary-General is convinced that both the Secretariat and member Governments could improve the flow of information between the regional and the global activities of the Organization. At the intergovernmental level, decisions adopted by delegations participating in the sessions of the regional commissions are not always relayed with agility to the permanent missions at Headquarters. At the Secretariat level, the work undertaken by the regional commissions is not always adequately disseminated, especially at United Nations Headquarters. Relatively simple remedies, including a more intensive use of the Internet, could make an important difference in this regard.

F. Recapitulation

27. In summary, and as mentioned earlier, looking at the role of the regional commissions in the broader context of United Nations reform raises complex issues. Moreover, just as reform must be viewed as a process, determining the way in which the regional commissions can contribute to improving the Organization's overall relevance, so effectiveness and efficiency must also be thought of in terms of progressive adaptations, within a specific time-frame agreed upon between member Governments and the Secretariat. In the preceding paragraphs, the Secretary-General has proposed four broad avenues that would lead to optimizing the potential that the regional commissions offer in terms of contributing to the central role of the United Nations in promoting development and international cooperation.

28. The first avenue originates in the internal reform efforts of each of the commissions, basically under the aegis of their respective intergovernmental machineries. In this regard, further measures to enhance the efficiency and effectiveness of the secretariats of each of the commissions should build on the reviews already undertaken to strengthen their internal functioning and effectiveness, to clarify their role and functions, and to define their relationships and promote cooperation with United Nations and non-United Nations entities. The Secretary-General believes that horizontal cooperation between the commissions should be encouraged, so that the best practices in any commission can, with the adequate adjustments, be adopted by the rest.

29. The second avenue originates in the need to determine a rational distribution of the Secretariat's responsibilities based on, among other criteria, geographical considerations, that is to say, what entities should undertake which activities at the global, regional, and national levels. For his part, the Secretary-General commits himself to (a) assuring active participation of the regional commissions in the Executive Committee for Economic and Social Affairs; (b) carrying out joint exercises, between each commission and the Department of Economic and Social Affairs as well as UNCTAD, outlining the inputs that the commissions would be expected to provide to global programmes and the support the Department of Economic and Social Affairs and UNCTAD would be expected to provide to each commission, and consulting with intergovernmental forums so that the resulting letters of understanding will be reflected in the programming and budgeting of each of the departments concerned; (c) developing the criteria for measuring comparative advantages within the Secretariat through a joint effort of the Department of Economic and

Social Affairs, UNCTAD and the five regional commissions, under the direct coordination of the Deputy Secretary-General; and (d) optimizing the convening power of the regional commissions as an important mechanism for articulating regional perspectives on global issues.

30. The intergovernmental machinery can also make an important contribution to this effort. For its part, the Economic and Social Council may wish to clarify the manner in which it should interact with the intergovernmental machinery of the regional commissions, so that its overall guidance and coordination is fully taken into account. Furthermore, the ongoing exercises on priority-setting in some of the regional commissions should become a key ingredient in respect of involving Governments in defining the distribution of responsibilities of the United Nations overall work programme at the global, regional and national levels.

31. The third avenue refers to the need to improve coordination of the activities of the regional commissions with other regional activities within the United Nations system proper, which requires efforts on the part of the Secretariat and member Governments. The Secretary-General proposes (a) to organize, in each geographical area, yearly meetings between the regional commissions and all United Nations funds and programmes, agencies and departments engaged in regional and intercountry activities, in order to reinforce synergies and avoid overlapping of all United Nations regional activities; (b) to assure active participation of the regional commissions in the United Nations Development Group; (c) to reactivate the activities of the Task Force created in June 1994 by UNDP and the regional commissions; (d) to assure close consultations between UNDP and the regional commissions during the programming stages of the former's regional activities, and encourage partnerships between them in undertaking said activities; and (e) to enhance an approach to programming based on thematic, multisectoral and cross-cutting activities, which should facilitate interaction between the regional commissions and UNDP.

32. An important issue at the intergovernmental level relates to improved coordination between the Economic and Social Council and subsidiary committees of the General Assembly and the governing bodies of UNDP, the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) and the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF). In this respect, member Governments might wish to ensure the consistency of the decisions adopted in each forum regarding the issues discussed in this report. The Secretary-General will be further examining the role of the regional commissions in respect of the United Nations Development Assistance

Framework and the country strategy note and how it can be enhanced.

33. The fourth avenue pertains to the need to reinforce synergies and lessen duplication of efforts as regards the work programmes of the regional commissions and other non-United Nations regional or subregional bodies. In this spirit, the Secretary-General has instructed the executive secretaries of the regional commissions (a) to systematically seek a closer interaction with such bodies; (b) to undertake, when possible and as consistent with the overall objectives of the United Nations, joint endeavours with other regional entities, especially where specific mandates exist from both United Nations and non-United Nations intergovernmental bodies; and (c) to organize yearly meetings with non-United Nations regional and subregional bodies.

34. The above-mentioned efforts at intergovernmental-level coordination can also be strengthened. The Secretary-General is convinced that meetings of the bureaux of major regional organizations with the bureaux of the regional commissions could be very useful in this regard.

35. Finally, it is the belief of the Secretary-General that we can advance simultaneously as regards all of the actions proposed above. The substantive session of 1999 of the Economic and Social Council will provide a good opportunity to take stock of the progress achieved and to examine the next steps to be taken. In the meantime, advancing in the implementation of the measures proposed, both at the Secretariat and at the intergovernmental level, would be greatly facilitated through improved communications and the transmission of information on activities between the regional and the global levels of the Organization.

Notes

¹ All of these reforms aim at improved priority-setting, rationalization of intergovernmental meetings, efficiency measures and an improved allocation of human and financial resources to produce a relevant work programme.

² See E/1997/40 for a full description of the reforms undertaken until mid-1997, as well as addendum I to the present report.

³ For ease of reference, the recommendation derived from paras. 136 and 137 of the report of the Secretary-General on renewing the United Nations: a programme for reform (A/51/950) states the following: "That the Economic and Social Council initiate a general review of the regional commissions, in consultation with other regional bodies and Governments, bearing in mind the individual reviews each commission has already conducted, in order to consider the core competencies of the regional commissions vis-à-vis global bodies and other regional and subregional

intergovernmental bodies; and evaluate the most appropriate division of labour with regard to both standard-setting and technical cooperation activities and prospects for further rationalization and consolidation."

- ⁴ In this regard, the Summit of the Americas of 1996 and 1998 asked the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) to join the Organization of American States (OAS) and the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB) in supporting the Governments concerned in the establishment of a free trade area of the Americas. In the same vein, the Organization of African Unity (OAU) Summit of 1989 asked the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA), together with OAU and the African Development Bank (AfDB), to form a joint secretariat for supporting the establishment of the African Economic Community.

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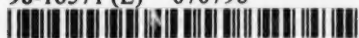
Substantive session of 1998
New York, 6-31 July 1998
Item 10 of the provisional agenda*
Regional cooperation

Regional cooperation in the economic, social and related fields**Report of the Secretary-General****Addendum***Summary*

For several years now, the regional commissions have been reporting to the Economic and Social Council on their efforts to adapt their respective bodies to the needs of the twenty-first century, all in the context of the restructuring and revitalization of the United Nations in the economic and social fields. These efforts acquired a fresh impetus in the last two years, as a result of the renewed momentum that reform had taken on as the Organization approached its fiftieth anniversary. In 1996, both the General Assembly (in its resolution 50/227) and the Council (in its resolution 1996/41) called for reviews of the regional commissions with a view to strengthening and enhancing their effectiveness as action-oriented and policy-oriented bodies. The Council in its resolution 1996/41 also requested the regional commissions to continue undertaking their own reviews and to report on the results to the Council at its substantive session of 1997.

In the past two years, considerable progress has been achieved by all of the commissions, with differences in content, scope and approach between them. A full account of the measures undertaken can be found in the report of the Secretary-General on regional cooperation in the economic, social and related fields (E/1997/40 and Add.1) presented to

* E/1998/100.



the Economic and Social Council at its substantive session of 1997, and in the present addendum to the report of the Secretary-General (E/1998/65) on the same subject, prepared for submission to the council at its substantive session of 1998. Still, this addendum differs from those submitted on previous occasions in several respects. First and foremost, it comes on the heels of the Secretary-General's programme for reform, as presented in document A/51/950 and addenda. It will be recalled that in that document, the Secretary-General recommended that the Council initiate a general review of the regional commissions. The General Assembly endorsed this recommendation in its resolution 52/12B of 19 December 1997, and invited the Council, in consultation with Member States and appropriate intergovernmental regional bodies, to conduct a general review of the regional commissions at its substantive session of 1998, bearing in mind the relevant provisions of Assembly resolution 50/227 and the individual reviews each commission had already carried out, in order to consider the competencies of the regional commissions, taking into account the competencies of global bodies and other regional and subregional intergovernmental bodies, and to submit a report thereon to the Assembly before the end of its fifty-second session. Thus, this addendum to the report of the Secretary-General examines the role of the regional commissions in the broader context of the reform of the United Nations.

In addition to the review of implementation of reform within each of the commissions, this addendum also reviews selected activities implemented during the period between the Council's substantive sessions of 1997 and 1998, including follow-up to recent world conferences.

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I. Reform of the regional commissions

A. Economic Commission for Europe

1. In September 1995, the Economic Commission for Europe (ECE) undertook an in-depth review of its strategic directions, intergovernmental structure and methods of work. This reform process culminated in the preparation of a Declaration on the Strengthening of Economic Cooperation in Europe¹ and a related Plan of Action² which were adopted by ECE at its jubilee session in April 1997 and subsequently endorsed by the Economic and Social Council at its substantive session of 1997 (July).
2. The central objective of the reform of ECE was to establish the strategic direction of the Commission and to take measures to increase its efficiency and effectiveness in fulfilling its core competencies and functions, which are described below. Basically, the ECE reform process has been conducted in a comprehensive and transparent manner and in full partnership with all member countries of the commission. This process entailed an in-depth review of the programme of work and refocusing of activities on the priority areas of environment, transport, statistics and trade. It also led to a thorough examination of the intergovernmental structure of the commission, and its methods of work, as well as its relations with other bodies, civil society organizations and the business community.
3. The main features of ECE reform were highlighted in the report of the Secretary-General in the economic, social and related fields (E/1997/40 and Add.1) prepared for the substantive session of 1997 of the Economic and Social Council. Since then, the reform has been expeditiously implemented. The number of ECE principal subsidiary bodies (PSBs) has been reduced from 14 to 7, and all of them have streamlined their programme of work through rationalization, consolidation and suppression of obsolete activities in accordance with the Plan of Action. The PSBs have in turn reviewed their related bodies in order to reduce their number and limit them to two categories: working parties of a standing nature and ad hoc groups of experts established for a two-year period with a precise programme of work and sunset clauses. This thereby simplifies the whole intergovernmental structure and makes it more transparent. The bureaux of the PSBs have also been reformed in order to fulfil the objectives assigned to them by the Plan of Action, in particular to increase the efficiency of the annual meetings of the PSBs through a well-focused agenda, preparation of the decisions to be taken and the

active monitoring of work performed since the previous session.

4. Changes in the methods of work have also been carried out in order to increase efficiency in the functioning of both the intergovernmental machinery and the secretariat, including a reduction in the duration of meetings, a streamlining of pre-session documents and a shortening of meeting reports.
5. With the support of their bureaux, the PSBs have started to prioritize all their activities. This process, together with the oversight and adjusting mechanism of the programme of work established by the reform, introduces more flexibility and dynamism in programming, by allowing existing activities to be terminated and new ones to be initiated at a pace in keeping with the changing needs and realities of the region.
6. All PSBs also pay particular attention to the incorporation, in their programme of work, of the four cross-sectoral concerns identified in the reform, namely: the outlook for sustainable development, the mainstreaming of the gender-perspective, the special concern for economies in transition and the involvement of the business community. PSBs have also developed intersectoral linkages as demonstrated in the field of transport and environment (see paras. 129-130 on the Vienna Conference).
7. Finally, the structure of the secretariat has been modified and streamlined as a consequence of the new substantive orientations, the institutional changes contained in the Plan of Action and the efficiency gains achieved. Posts within the activities terminated or streamlined have been abolished or redeployed to sectors strengthened in the context of the reform. Further efficiency gains would permit the reallocation of staff so as to respond to new needs and requests which, by way of the mechanism established by the reform, will be reviewed every two years by the Commission.

Core competencies and functions

8. In responding to the specific needs of the region, ECE has two core functions, namely:
 - (a) In the fields of environment, transport, statistics, trade, industry and enterprise development, sustainable energy, timber and human settlements, the development of common legal instruments, norms, standards or guidelines and the harmonization of policies and practices in order to facilitate harmonious economic relationships among the countries of the region as well as agreed responses to common problems. In future, the acquired capacity of the

Commission to develop norms and standards will enable it to respond fully to changing needs and circumstances in these and other domains of common concern at the pan-European and trans-Atlantic level. For example, the involvement of and partnership with non-governmental organizations and the public, in both the development and implementation of conventions, could be encouraged as has been done recently during the development of the draft convention on access to information, public participation and access to justice in environmental matters;

(b) The production of statistics and analyses in the above-mentioned areas as well as economic and policy analyses covering the whole region with a particular focus on current developments and problems of structural change in countries in transition. This function enables all member countries to share experiences and to have a sound basis for policy formulation, with a view to promoting sustainable development at the country, subregional and regional levels.

9. To enable countries in transition, as well as countries in war-torn areas, to use and fully benefit from the integration tools developed by ECE, the Commission carries out technical assistance activities, directly linked to the above-mentioned functions, mainly in the form of advisory services and demand-driven workshops. They primarily support countries in transition in (a) the implementation of conventions, norms and standards; (b) capacity development; and (c) the improvement of data-collection and dissemination systems.

10. As one of the five "regional arms" of the United Nations, the Commission has two additional core functions:

(a) Bringing the contribution of the ECE region to the global level through inputs into the preparations for and follow-up to global conferences as well as by making ECE's normative instruments known and available to non-ECE members or to the international community as a whole;

(b) Facilitating the implementation of international commitments through, *inter alia*, its catalytic role among United Nations and non-United Nations organizations active in the region regarding the follow-up to global conferences on cross-sectoral issues and through its direct involvement in such follow-up on sectoral issues pertaining to its fields of competence.

11. At its most recent session, held from 20 to 23 April 1998, the Commission underscored the above core functions of ECE and emphasized that its technical cooperation activities, which are limited in scale, are to be undertaken in support of those functions and particularly for the benefit of countries with economies in transition. It also underscored

the role of ECE in bringing the contribution of the region to the global level and in facilitating implementation of international commitments at the regional level within its areas of work.

ECE cooperation with other bodies in the field of norms- and standard-setting

12. Norms and standards developed by ECE respond to the specific situation and needs of the region. ECE's role in this domain is well established. The risk of duplication in this field is very low, given that there is a clear division of labour among relevant organizations and that there are mechanisms for mutual exchange of information among regional and subregional organizations, at both the intergovernmental and the secretariat levels. These mechanisms were reinforced by the Plan of Action. For example, ECE is the only forum that develops and adopts region-wide agreements and norms for road, railway, inland water and combined transport, while on its part the European Conference of Ministers of Transport (ECMT) is the political framework for discussing general directions in this sector. In the field of environment, ECE has a comprehensive agenda on environmental issues while the Council of Europe addresses issues related to pan-European biological and landscape diversity. In areas of both transport and environment, ECE and the European Union (EU) have developed a "two-way dynamics": based on the complementarity of their membership, a number of ECE normative instruments are translated into EU legislation and sometimes the latter is used as a basis for drafting instruments for the whole ECE region. In statistics, the ECE Conference of European Statisticians discusses jointly the work programmes of ECE, the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), the Statistical Office of the European Communities (Eurostat) and other organizations.

13. Many ECE norms and standards may meet global needs or those of several countries of other regions. Their extension is realized in a pragmatic way as illustrated by the following examples: (a) the TIR (international road transport) Convention has been adopted by a number of non-ECE member States; (b) the protocol on persistent organic pollutants (POPs) under the ECE convention on air pollution is being used by the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) which is initiating a global legal instrument in the same area; (c) the Centre for Facilitation of Procedures and Practices for Administration, Commerce and Transport (CEFACT), which was created by ECE in order to take up, adapt and extend the set of norms and standards established for trade facilitation, is open to all

United Nations Member States as well as to members of the non-governmental organization and business community.

14. Many of the ECE guidelines aim primarily at supporting countries in transition to build up a market-based legal regulatory framework. These guides relate in particular to promotion of foreign direct investment (FDI), international contract practices, reform of land administration and real estate. ECE exchanges information and cooperates with a number of other relevant regional and global organizations active in the area that have different memberships or different mandates in order to avoid duplication, and to secure complementarity in approaches. In addition, ECE which gathers all the countries of the region on an equal footing, provides the most suitable forum for review and policy dialogue of issues of regional concern, including taking into account the concerns of particular groups of countries, and for harmonizing recommendations.

15. ECE continues to observe the general rule that when organizations are active in the same field and in the same countries they have to maintain a regular dialogue, and when one decides to embark upon the development of an instrument, the rationale for such an undertaking and its consistency with instruments already adopted in other organizations are carefully examined with the organizations concerned. For example, the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) and ECE have agreed on a division of labour in the areas of trade facilitation, trade efficiency and trade promotion with the International Trade Centre (ITC) and are discussing their approaches for transit transport.

ECE cooperation with other bodies in the field of operational activities

16. The primary objective of operational activities within ECE is to support the core functions of the Commission as presented above. They consist primarily of advisory services, preparation of bankable projects and the organization of workshops. They are undertaken either with individual countries or with groups of countries mainly in cooperation with relevant subregional groupings. Being more political than technical entities, the subregional groupings are increasingly requesting ECE to provide expertise in areas that promote subregional economic integration, such as transport and border-crossing, addressing of common environmental concerns, investment promotion and sustainable energy development. In order to respond consistently to these demands, agreements (in the form of a "memorandum of understanding" or an exchange of letters) have been reached between ECE and the following

subregional groupings: the Central European Initiative (CEI), the Black Sea Economic Cooperation (BSEC) and the Inter-State Economic Committee of the Economic Union of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS). Programmes of cooperation have also been established within the framework of the South East European Cooperative Initiative (SECI) and, recently, in partnership with the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP), the Special Programme for Economies of Central Asia (SPECA).

17. All these programmes aim at facilitating good neighbourlike relations and cooperation among participating countries in respect of promoting exchanges of experience as well as greater awareness and effective use of the instruments developed at the intergovernmental level within ECE.

18. So far, most ECE operational activities have been undertaken by the regional advisers with backstopping from regular staff members involved in normative and analytical work. This ensures and strengthens cross-fertilization and mutual reinforcement of the two types of activities. At the same time, stronger cooperation with other interested organizations, including financing institutions, is called for in order to provide better service and to avoid inconsistency in terms of the advice provided.

19. Such cooperation already exists for capacity-building in the national administration of countries in transition. For example, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) provides support that enables ECE to assist the statistical offices of these countries in improving the methodology and data collection of demographic and social statistics. Similarly, the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) and ECE cooperate in assisting countries in the preparation of the population and housing censuses in the 2000 round. Both projects are good examples of cooperation for capacity-building, based on common objectives and complementary assets of the organizations involved. This type of cooperation could be extended to other areas, for example, legal literacy in the environmental field with UNEP; training on human settlements reforms with the United Nations Centre for Human Settlements (Habitat); and capacity-building activities with UNDP in ECE areas of expertise, it being understood that such areas should be explicit components of the national frameworks (country strategy note (CSN) and United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF)) established in countries in transition.

20. Another type of cooperation is developed through regional programmes which include local projects requesting

the involvement of country-based institutions and development banks. An example of this is ECE's Programme on "Energy Efficiency 2000" which is developed with the support of the UNDP/World Bank Global Environment Facility (GEF). It includes projects on energy efficiency demonstration zones located in several countries in transition. Through such cooperation, the financing dimension, the concern for national execution and the need to comply with standards are brought together.

21. More generally, in addition to providing technical and legal expertise, ECE is the regional forum wherein concerned public and private partners can meet and experiences drawn from individual projects can be shared, thereby providing international exposure to local and national teams, and facilitating project replication in other countries.

22. The Plan of Action devotes a full chapter to relations with other bodies. The directions have been and continue to be implemented both by the secretariat and by member countries. Nonetheless, it takes time to create a "culture of cooperation" which can be further achieved through regular exchange of information, mutual recognition of the areas of expertise and undertaking of joint activities as appropriate.

B. Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific

23. The Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) undertook three major exercises in recent years for its reform; – in 1987 (see E/1988/69), 1992 (see E/1992/65/Add.1) and 1997 (see E/1997/40 and Add.1). The 1992 review led to the conclusion that the dynamic changes in the Asia-Pacific region argued strongly for an intersectoral, multidisciplinary strategy to meet the region's evolving needs. Consequently, the Commission recommended the adoption of a thematic approach to address the region's development challenges. The 1997 review entailed extensive deliberations by the Advisory Committee of Permanent Representatives (ACPR), followed by the Regional Preparatory Meeting on the Review of the Conference Structure of the commission, held in Bangkok from 24 to 28 February 1997 (see E/ESCAP/1048). The results of these deliberations were reviewed by the Commission itself, which reconfirmed the thematic approach. That review also emphasized the evolutionary process of the reform, as well as the need for further sharpening of the focus of work of the Commission and its subsidiary bodies, thereby improving efficiency and effectiveness in delivery of ESCAP's work programme.

24. In light of the reform of the United Nations at the Headquarters level, in particular the process set in motion through the adoption by the General Assembly of its resolutions 50/227 and 52/12 B further guided the commission in its continuing work on reform and restructuring. The Commission, at its fifty-fourth session, held in Bangkok from 16 to 22 April 1998, considered two documents (E/ESCAP/1083 and 1084) prepared by the secretariat to provide, respectively (a) an overview of the reform and restructuring being carried out, and (b) an examination of the comparative advantage of ESCAP.

25. The reforms undertaken by ESCAP resulted in the reduction of the number of components of the Commission's subsidiary structure from nine to seven, with the structure comprising three thematic committees (on regional economic cooperation; socio-economic measures to alleviate poverty in rural and urban areas; environment and natural resources development), two technical committees (on transport, communications, tourism and infrastructure development; and statistics) and two special bodies (on least developed and landlocked developing countries; and Pacific island developing countries). All except the committees on poverty alleviation, environment and transport will meet biennially. To correspond to the new intergovernmental structure, in the context of the revision to the medium-term plan, 1998-2001, a revised programme structure is also being established in two phases, comprising seven subprogrammes (originally reduced from 15 to 10 and then to 7). Furthermore, to ensure congruence between the programme and the secretariat structures, the secretariat is also undergoing reorganization, to be implemented in two phases as well during 1998-1999, entailing reduction of the number of substantive divisions to seven. This will fulfil a major recommendation of the Office of Internal Oversight Services of the United Nations Secretariat.

26. The series of above reviews reconfirmed time and again that the Commission itself should meet annually. However, over the years its duration has been reduced from 10 days to 6 days. Moreover, in order to enhance its effectiveness under the new arrangement, the ministerial segment of the Commission is to be preceded by a senior officials segment, each for a duration of three days. Recommendations have also been made for organizing informal meetings of the heads of delegations as well as panel discussions on important special issues. Furthermore, the limit on the number of intergovernmental meetings (other than committee sessions), to be held with prior approval of the Commission, has been reduced from 15 meetings to 5 meetings per year, with their total duration reduced from 100 days to 25 days per calendar year.

27. At the same time, various other efficiency initiatives already under way within the ESCAP secretariat (covering management, information systems and internal reporting; documentation and publications; conference services; general services; utilities and communications; staff training; and staff travel) will continue to be vigorously pursued. The fifty-fourth session of the Commission welcomed the revival of the ESCAP Publications Committee, which would serve to control the quality and quantity of publications under the regular budget with a view to redeploying some resources to training and technical assistance activities.

28. These measures have enabled the secretariat to perform its function, including the need to provide assistance to the new members from Central Asia, and to comply with the directives of the Commission with a number of staff reduced from 515 to 468 and a budget from US\$ 67.5 million in the biennium 1996/1997 to US\$ 56.2 million in the biennium 1998/1999.

Core competencies

29. To take stock of the reform efforts undertaken so far, the Commission considered at its fifty-fourth session a secretariat study on review and reform (E/ESCAP/1084) and examined the core competencies (that is to say, the comparative advantage) and functions of ESCAP in the context of the region's economic and social development, the relations between ESCAP and its development partners, and the challenges facing the organization including its role and relevance into the twenty-first century. It found that the basis for the Commission's core competencies lies in its role as the only region-wide intergovernmental policy forum, as well as in its functions of regional standard- and goal-setting, monitoring and analysis of economic and social trends, regional data collection and development information dissemination, and regional follow-up to the global United Nations conferences. In terms of operational dimension, its role includes the delivery of catalytic projects, transfer of experience and best practices, cross-border projects, technical cooperation among developing countries and regional technical advisory services.

30. The Commission noted that ESCAP had been engaged in the reform exercise over a considerable period of time. Those reform efforts needed to be pursued in the broader context of economic and social developments in the region and the Commission's ability to respond, in an adequate and timely manner, to emerging problems. In keeping with the times, ESCAP needed to continue adjusting itself to changing circumstances and conditions to ensure that it remained relevant and responsive to the needs of the

membership. The Commission emphasized the need to devise clearer objectives for the activities of ESCAP and to set time-frames to achieve those objectives. The regular monitoring and impact assessment capabilities of ESCAP needed to be strengthened. In addition, the results of the questionnaire on priorities and resource allocation should be reflected in the programme planning and budgeting process as soon as possible. The Commission recommended that the activities and services offered by ESCAP, and its success stories, be made more widely known, by both the secretariat and member Governments.

31. In considering operational activities, the Commission emphasized the need to continue forging strategic alliances between ESCAP and other United Nations bodies and agencies, as well as other relevant organizations in the region. It emphasized that resources, including regular budget resources, should be directed more to operational activities than to meetings and publications. It urged that members and associate members that had not yet done so should, in order to define more clearly the Commission's work programme priorities, complete the questionnaire on resources allocation that had been circulated by the secretariat in February 1997. This was considered especially important in view of the current decline in extrabudgetary funding, which had in the past been a major source of support for the Commission's operational activities. It was suggested that non-governmental organizations should be given more opportunities to participate in the Commission's technical assistance projects.

32. For the Commission, achieving the objectives of rationalizing, streamlining and enhancing the efficiency and effectiveness of its work so as to enable it to better tackle the complex development issues faced by the countries of the region is a continuing task. In its discussion of ESCAP's continuing reform efforts, the Commission at its fifty-fourth session identified the following activities for further action: (a) to rationalize its work programme based upon its core competencies; (b) to further strengthen project monitoring and self-evaluation of both ongoing and completed projects on a systematic basis; (c) to further reduce the percentage of resources devoted to programme support activities; (d) within the work programme, to redeploy resources from meetings and publications to technical assistance activities; and (e) to implement promptly the recommendations of the Office of Internal Oversight Services of the United Nations Secretariat.

33. In that connection, it may be recalled that in its resolution 53/1 entitled "Restructuring the conference structure of the Commission",³ adopted by ESCAP at its fifty-third session held in April 1997, ESCAP, *inter alia*,

provided the Advisory Committee of Permanent Representatives with the functions to assist the Executive Secretary in drawing up proposals for the medium-term plan, the programme budget and the work programme priorities and resource allocation, consistent with the guidelines provided by the Commission, and to monitor and evaluate the implementation, outcome and effectiveness of the Commission's programme of work.⁴ At its recent fifty-fourth session, the Commission recognized that ACPR was a unique and productive forum within the United Nations system and served as an important link between representatives of members and associate members and the secretariat. The Commission reiterated that an important function of ACPR was its overseeing and monitoring role and, in that regard, urged the secretariat to strengthen the constructive and cooperative relationship already established between ACPR and the secretariat, in particular with respect to the resource allocations and monitoring of expenditures. The Commission also acknowledged that ACPR played an important role in advising the secretariat in its efforts to enhance the effectiveness and efficiency of programme delivery within the wider reform being undertaken by the United Nations system.⁵

34. The Commission at its fifty-fourth session emphasized that it would be useful for its views on ESCAP's reform to be brought to the attention of the Economic and Social Council. It therefore agreed that the chairman of the Commission would be invited to transmit to the Secretary-General and the President of the Economic and Social Council a letter detailing the views and concerns of the Commission on the subject.⁶

Regional coordination

35. ESCAP also performs a role in fostering regional-level coordination and enhancing synergy through the Regional Inter-agency Committee for Asia and the Pacific (RICAP), for which it serves as the convener and provides secretariat support. Some of the 13 subcommittees of RICAP are actively promoting joint programming as well as funding for joint projects. Some of them also include subregional groupings, non-governmental organizations and civic society organizations as members. The fifty-fourth session of the Commission, in its resolution 54/2, entitled "Manila Declaration on Accelerated Implementation of the Agenda for Action on Social Development in the ESCAP Region", *inter alia*, recommended the establishment of another RICAP subcommittee on the regional social development agenda.

36. At its fifty-fourth session, the Commission also voiced strong support for the mandate of ESCAP as "team leader"

for the United Nations system in the economic and social fields in Asia and the Pacific. Particular value was accorded to the role of RICAP in avoiding unnecessary duplication and in increasing the synergy and complementarity among the programmes of work of the respective entities. It was also pointed out that coordination should extend beyond the United Nations system to include other regional and subregional organizations, in order to achieve optimal use of existing resources.

Relation with subregional organizations

37. ESCAP provides substantive support to the subregional organizations through its analytical work and project-based assistance, at their request. Since 1994, it has convened an annual consultative meeting of the region's subregional organizations, for which it serves also as the secretariat. The first meeting in 1994 identified trade and investment, transport and communication, energy and human resources development as priority areas for inter-subregional cooperation. In 1997, it facilitated the establishment of yet another economic cooperation grouping, BIMST-EC, involving Bangladesh, India, Myanmar, Sri Lanka and Thailand, and assisted it in considering the opportunities for economic cooperation in nine major areas. In North-East Asia, ESCAP has brought together senior officials from China, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Japan, Mongolia, the Republic of Korea and the Russian Federation to discuss issues ranging from trade to transport and infrastructure development and environment. ESCAP's cooperation with the Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO) and the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) is undertaken within the framework of the memoranda of understanding (MOUs) established with those organizations, respectively, in 1993 and 1994. A similar MOU was also signed with the Asian Development Bank in 1993. The ESCAP Pacific Operations Centre (ESCAP-POC), based in Vanuatu, undertakes substantive collaboration with the South Pacific Forum secretariat, the South Pacific Commission and the South Pacific Regional Environment Programme. Cooperation with the Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN) is based on specific requests. In 1997, ESCAP and the ASEAN secretariat organized a joint event entitled "Joint Seminar on Trade and Investment Cooperation in South-East Asia: Opportunities and Challenges Toward ASEAN 10 and Beyond", focusing on the accession of Cambodia, the Lao People's Democratic Republic and Myanmar to ASEAN. The seminar was held in Jakarta from 19 to 21 February 1997.

38. Relevant regional/subregional non-governmental organizations and civic groups from within the region as

well as technical intergovernmental bodies, such as Asia Pacific Telecommunity, Centre for Integrated Rural Development for Asia and the Pacific, International Pepper Community, Typhoon Committee, Mekong River Commission and so on, actively participate in the meetings of the Commission and its subsidiary committees. In particular, their contributions have been noteworthy in the regional ministerial meetings organized by the Commission in recent years both in preparation for and follow-up of the global conferences in the fields of environment, social development, women, population and human settlement. With some of them, such as Colombo Plan Bureau, Regional Network of Local Authorities for the Management of Human Settlements and the Asian Institute of Transport Development, ESCAP maintains structured cooperation through MOUs or exchange of letters. Participation of all these organizations, representing diverse, cross-sectoral interests of the region, in ESCAP's meetings and activities helps avoid duplication and contribute to the attainment of greater synergy. Currently, non-governmental organization involvement is prominent in the implementation of the Asia Pacific Decade for Disabled Persons. Cooperation with the private sector is pursued through a network of the region's chambers of commerce; and creating an environment for private sector participation in infrastructure development features prominently in the work of the Committee on Transport, Communications, Tourism and Infrastructure Development.

C. Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean

39. Since the early 1990s, the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) has made an intensive effort of updating its substantive "message" to meet the development challenges of the future, and of adapting the organization to the rapidly changing circumstances in Latin America and the Caribbean. These efforts are reflected, *inter alia*:

(a) In the substantive realm, in the series of flagship documents that the organization has been publishing yearly, under the banner of "changing production patterns and social equity", which have offered a useful framework for the more detailed development issues explored through the secretariat's analytical work;⁷

(b) In the institutional realm, in clarifying ECLAC's mission statement, in seeking a closer interaction with its member Governments, and in adopting internal reforms of the secretariat and the intergovernmental machinery so as

to rationalize the use of resources, to streamline the secretariat and to adopt efficiency measures, and in seeking closer collaboration with other United Nations and non-United Nations intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations. A brief description of these measures adopted through 1997 is available in a separate document (see LC/G.1962). New resolutions were adopted by the Commission at its recent twenty-seventh session (Aruba, 11-16 May 1998) which only tend to consolidate the trend of the past years. Thus, a new resolution, on the reform of the United Nations and its impact on ECLAC was approved; it is fully consistent with the measures adopted thus far.

Mission statement and core activities

40. During the Commission's twenty-sixth session, celebrated in San José, Costa Rica, in April 1996, a revised mission statement was adopted. The relevant resolution (553(XXVI)) defines ECLAC as a centre of excellence charged with collaborating with member States in a comprehensive analysis of development processes geared to the design, monitoring and evaluation of public policies and the resulting provision of operational services in the fields of specialized information, advisory services, training and support for regional and international cooperation and coordination.⁸

41. As can be gathered from this mission statement, ECLAC's core activities represent a blend of analytical or normative work (research; information-gathering, interpretation and dissemination; monitoring of economic events) with operational activities (especially technical assistance) and an advocacy role (exercised in part through the power of convening seminars and meetings). The organization has set high standards for its work (hence, the term "centre of excellence") which very much relies on drawing from national experiences. This, in turn, explains the capital importance the secretariat places on seeking a close relation with member Governments as well as non-governmental actors in the Latin American and Caribbean societies.

42. Perhaps the most important aspect of updating in the mission statement refers not to the functions of ECLAC – the institution has always carried out a mix of analytical and operational activities – but to the specific content of said activities. In selecting these activities, the double criterion of relevance and uniqueness is sought; in other words, an important effort is made to avoid duplication of the work being undertaken by other regional or global organizations, and topics selected for examination must meet the test of being significant as development issues.

Institutional reform

43. At the same time that an updating in ECLAC's development thinking was taking place, numerous actions have been taken within the secretariat to improve ECLAC's effectiveness and efficiency. The Commission's internal structure was streamlined and the number of divisions was reduced from 19 to 12 by merging subprogrammes and related functions. At the same time, productivity was significantly raised as a result of the introduction of computer technologies. An extraordinary example of the savings achieved as a result of new technologies is to be found in the area of editorial and distribution services.

44. Progress has also been achieved in the area of performance indicators. Although the analytical work of the Commission is resistant to a precise assessment of the volume and quality of outputs generated, and still more resistant to an analysis of the potential impact of such outputs, a task force has been set up, headed by a division chief, to develop a performance measurement system for the substantive work of ECLAC. Among other aspects, periodic questionnaires are sent out to the most obvious potential users of ECLAC's outputs to inquire about their relevance and usefulness. The system measures the degree to which activities are achieving their objectives as defined under each subprogramme.

45. One major step forward in the efforts to achieve greater relevance, effectiveness and efficiency was the design of a conceptual framework for adapting ECLAC to changing circumstances, within the United Nations and in Latin America and the Caribbean. This framework was outlined in the secretariat report entitled "Reform of the United Nations and its impact on ECLAC". The document, which was conceived as an "issues paper", was presented to the twenty-sixth session of the Commission, and gave rise to ECLAC resolution 553(XXVI), which sets forth the most far-reaching formal statement in recent times by the Commission on the role and functions of ECLAC. As already stated, during the recently held twenty-seventh session, a new resolution was adopted, building on resolution 553(XXVI), consolidating the progress achieved, and signalling new directions for further progress.

Relevance of programme of work and priority-setting

46. With regard to the interaction between the secretariat and the member States, ECLAC resolution 553(XXVI) established an ad hoc working group open to all ECLAC member countries and headed by the Chairman of the Commission, which, in consultation with the Executive

Secretary, is empowered to define priorities for the work programme and recommend to the Commission strategic directions for its future activities, taking into account the development priorities of Latin America and the Caribbean, as well as budgetary considerations.

47. Since its establishment, the group has met on three occasions, and representatives from 40 member States and three associate members have taken part. At the first meeting (29-31 July 1996) all the elements of the ECLAC work programme for the biennium 1998-1999 were thoroughly analysed and assigned a relative priority.

48. The second and third meetings (5 June and 12 November 1997) were devoted to reviewing the reforms adopted within the framework of a decentralized management scheme for which ECLAC was selected by the Secretary-General. To that end, the secretariat presented three notes entitled "Review of recent reforms adopted by the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean" (LC/G.1962), "Management pilot scheme" (LC/G.1964) and "Progress in the implementation of the pilot management scheme" (LC/G.1983).

49. The accomplishments of the ad hoc working group have laid the foundation for a new form of interaction between the Commission's member countries and the secretariat in priority-setting as well as in discussion of the "strategic directions" for the institution. As a consequence, the work programme appears more focused and responsive to the expectations of member States. During the twenty-seventh session of ECLAC, member Governments once more approved the work programme for the biennium 2000-2001, and delegated to the ad hoc working group the setting of priorities of the programme elements contained in the aforementioned document.

ECLAC and the organizations of the United Nations

50. ECLAC has a long tradition of cooperation, with virtually all of the funds, programmes and specialized agencies and organizations of the United Nations system that are active in the region. This cooperation has evolved within the existing regional and institutional context but its principal source of synergy continues to be the blending of the Commission's analytical capabilities with the operational experience gained by these institutions. In recent years, the level of funding of joint activities has declined (while bilateral contributions have increased), but coordination and cooperation between ECLAC and the development programmes of the United Nations has nevertheless been maintained. Still, the potential for duplication or overlapping

exists, especially between the activities of ECLAC and those included in UNDP's regional programme. Numerous efforts have been made by senior officials of both bodies to work more closely, but there is still room for improvement in this regard.

51. The links that ECLAC has nurtured with the organizations of the United Nations system are based on complementarity of the individual organization's objectives and their comparative advantages. Generally speaking, the Commission has contributed its multidisciplinary perspective on the issues under consideration, its database and its institutional position on macroeconomic and social issues, while the agencies have contributed their sectorally oriented and specialized knowledge. The complementarity of their areas of expertise has also enhanced the joint ability of the Commission and of the various organizations of the United Nations system to secure the participation of prominent experts in the intergovernmental meetings and seminars that they organize.

52. Another area in which there has been coordination and collaboration between ECLAC and other United Nations and regional bodies has been the preparatory work leading up to the international conferences convened by the Organization and the follow-up to the agreements adopted at those meetings. For example, in its capacity as a forum for region-wide consensus-building, ECLAC played an essential role in supporting the Governments' efforts to formulate joint proposals in preparation for the World Summit for Social Development, the International Conference on Population and Development and the Fourth World Conference on Women.

53. Finally, consultations and sometimes joint activities (mostly, seminars) have been undertaken with the Bretton Woods institutions.

ECLAC and regional institutions

54. ECLAC has made a systematic effort to work closely with regional and subregional institutions to avoid, as much as possible, duplication or overlapping in work programmes. At the minimum, periodic meetings are held with officials of those organizations to confront the issue of work programmes, exchange information and, often, reach collaborative agreements. At best, joint activities have been carried out, or, as happens with subregional secretariats of economic integration movements, ECLAC works through these subregional secretariats.

55. ECLAC has maintained close institutional relations in the field of cooperation with the Organization of American States (OAS), the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB),

the Latin American Economic System (SELA), the Central American Integration System, the Caribbean Community and the Latin American Integration System (ALADI). Special mention should be made of a broad agreement that was signed with IDB in April 1996, which has opened the way for exploring possible joint studies and programmes in a number of areas. ECLAC also works jointly with OAS and IDB, in a tripartite agreement, to further western hemispheric integration. This arrangement was ratified and enhanced at the Second Summit of the Americas, held in Santiago, Chile, in April 1998.

56. The context within which the Commission functions has changed significantly in recent decades with the creation of a large number of national, subregional and regional entities that pursue activities of a similar nature. ECLAC remains in a unique position, however, since it is still the only institution that is devoted to a systematic analysis, from a regional perspective, of issues having a bearing on the development of all the Latin American and Caribbean countries and that combines its work in that area with the provision of technical cooperation services and activities in support of regional and subregional international cooperation.

57. ECLAC is committed to strengthening intraregional cooperation in Latin America and the Caribbean. The region has a strong tradition of cooperation at this level, and the process is now gaining even greater momentum. In addition to serving as a sounding board and as a catalyst for debate on a wide range of development issues, ECLAC has furnished technical services to the secretariats of regional and subregional integration mechanisms, has fostered technical cooperation among developing countries, has served as a liaison with global forums and has facilitated the region's participation therein.

ECLAC and the non-governmental sector

58. Although in the past ECLAC's counterparts have been mostly official institutions, particularly in the economic sector, ECLAC has strengthened its relationship with the non-governmental organization sector, in order to receive inputs for research orientation and analysis of the region, and to reach, through them, a wider audience or partners at the grass-roots level.

59. ECLAC capitalized on the participatory impetus provided by the preparatory process for the recent United Nations world conferences and is presently engaged in maintaining these levels of participation in the follow-up activities. As one of the preparatory activities for the first meeting in follow-up to the World Summit for Social

Development (São Paulo, Brazil, 6-9 April 1997), ECLAC sponsored and took part in a regional meeting of non-governmental organizations organized by the International Council for Social Welfare. Likewise, more than 80 non-governmental organizations participated in preparatory activities for the seventh session of ECLAC's Regional Conference on the Integration of Women in Development in Latin America and the Caribbean (Santiago, Chile, 19-21 November).

60. In addition, ECLAC has made substantive contributions to numerous activities organized by non-governmental organizations throughout the region, such as the Regional Office of Consumers International, the Latin American Confederation of the Young Men's Christian Associations, the Brazilian Bar Association, the South American Commission for Peace and Security and the Latin American Council for Social Sciences (CLACSO), among others. ECLAC also regularly contributes articles to regional publications, such as *Social Development Review* edited by the International Council on Social Welfare (ICSW) and *Security Dialogue* edited by the World Commission for Peace and Security.

D. Economic Commission for Africa

61. Prior to the adoption of General Assembly resolution 52/12 B, the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) had undertaken extensive reforms so as to strengthen and to make more effective the Commission's contribution to the political, social and economic renewal taking place in Africa, as well as to respond to the mandate of Assembly resolution 50/227. Extensive consultations were held on the new strategic directions of the Commission with various stakeholders, including African Governments, high-level African experts, regional and subregional organizations, the private sector and civil society, the Commission's principal partners (representatives of United Nations agencies, bilateral donors and private international foundations), culminating in their endorsement of the new strategic directions for ECA by the Conference of African Ministers for Economic and Social Development and Planning at its annual session in May 1996.

62. The reforms implemented by ECA encompassed three dimensions: programmes- and priority-setting, institutional and organizational restructuring, including the restructuring of the Commission's intergovernmental machinery, and managerial strengthening. The new programme structure focuses on the following themes: facilitating economic and social policy analysis; ensuring food security and sustainable

development; strengthening development management; harnessing information and communications for development; and promoting regional cooperation and integration. Two themes – capacity-building and promoting women in development – were considered to be cross-cutting and are therefore mainstreamed across the five thematic subprogrammes.

63. Organizational restructuring focused on streamlining and strengthening programme planning, budgeting, financial control, monitoring and evaluation; the building of a team-based human resources and systems management function; and improved management of physical facilities, procurement and general services. Attention was also given to the establishment of a more effective internal and external communications strategy. This entailed a new publications programme and dissemination strategy, electronic networks, and increased use of computers, e-mail and the Internet. Managerial strengthening has involved moving ECA from a hierarchical, output-oriented structure to a flat, flexible, team-based, results-oriented structure; decentralization of resources and decision-making (to the extent permitted under United Nations budgetary rules), in return for greater accountability for results; and increased emphasis on staff training for skills upgrading and to engender a culture of teamwork.

64. Institutional restructuring has involved the transformation of the multinational programming and operational centres (MULPOCs) into subregional development centres (SRDCs), and strengthening these centres, in terms of human and financial resources. The goal is to redeploy 25 per cent of the Commission's resources to SRDCs by the end of 1998. The Commission has also streamlined its intergovernmental machinery, eliminating overlapping bodies that deal with related issues, thus promoting greater coherence and coordination within the intergovernmental machinery. This has resulted in fewer subsidiary bodies and a reduced number of meetings, saving the time and travel costs of national decision makers, strengthening the quality of decisions and programme directives, and releasing resources for substantive activities.

65. The early outcome of ECA's renewal, reorientation and restructuring process has been a more focused and selective approach in its work programme and clearer responsibilities for programme managers. The results expected by the end of the current biennium are a marked increase in efficiency and timeliness, measurable impacts, and a higher rating of ECA products by member States, partners and other clients. The long-term objective of this renewal is a better-purposed and stronger ECA, more effective in its partnership with

other organizations, and playing an enhanced role in the development of Africa.

ECA's core competencies

66. The competencies and functions of ECA, as a regional commission, can be classified by the following categories, namely: advocacy and policy analysis; data and information dissemination; convening stakeholders and building consensus; technical cooperation; and norms- or standards-setting. ECA has contributed to fostering economic and social development in Africa through its works in these main areas. The review of ECA's relationships vis-à-vis the global entities, regional and subregional organizations centred around the core functions of norm-setting and technical cooperation, as indicated in the report of the Secretary-General on renewing the United Nations: a programme of reform (A/51/950 and addenda).

ECA's collaboration with global and regional organizations in norm-setting

67. ECA's work in the area of norm-setting is closely related to its analytical and advocacy work, especially in the area of regional cooperation. Regional cooperation and economic integration call for standards and norms to be set for intraregional free flow of production factors, and goods and services. This involves the convergence and harmonization of trade, investment, micro- and macroeconomic policy and the standardization of instruments and management practices among countries. It also requires liberalization and harmonization of cross-border transport regulations, including road and safety standards.

68. ECA's work in norm-setting is linked to fostering regional cooperation and integration; and there is no duplication with the activities of the global entities, as none work in this area. The United Nations Transport and Communications Decades in Africa have provided ECA with a vehicle for fostering infrastructural development, and developing norms on road transport safety as well as for collaboration among some agencies of the United Nations. The collaboration between ECA and UNDP in the area of regional integration focuses on supporting the administrative and technical process of establishing the African Economic Community (AEC). Similarly, the collaboration between ECA and the Organization of African Unity (OAU), in the context of the joint secretariat established by the OAU Summit, centres on supporting the establishment of AEC. This collaboration has entailed the preparation of the protocols for the Abuja Treaty Establishing the African

Economic Community (A/46/651, annex). Both have fielded joint missions to assess the requirements for strengthening the regional economic communities, which, according to the 1991 Treaty, will serve as the building blocks of AEC.

69. The collaboration between ECA and the subregional organizations has encompassed three areas. First, ECA was instrumental in the establishment of many of these organizations. Second, ECA has developed an extensive programme of collaboration through its subregional development centres for assisting the subregional organizations, including issues of norm-setting. Third, ECA has provided technical assistance in capacity-building to strengthen the effectiveness and functioning of these institutions.

ECA's collaboration with global and regional organizations in technical cooperation

70. Technical cooperation is the main vehicle by which the Commission assists member States in implementing their development policies and objectives. If one conceives of the Commission's advocacy role as prescriptive, then its technical cooperation function involves supporting member States to implement their established priorities and programmes of development. ECA's technical cooperation, by definition, does not involve disbursement of resources. It takes the form of short-term advisory services rendered to member States and their intergovernmental organizations at their request and demand-driven workshops, seminars and fellowships; institution-building; and field projects. Advisory services are provided by a team of regional advisers who are deployed in the various substantive divisions of the Commission and are currently the principal vehicle for the delivery of expert support at the country level. As the resources provided to the Commission for advisory services have increased, so has the scope of the services rendered to member States. The Commission organizes over 40 group training workshops and seminars every year to increase and improve skilled manpower capacity.

71. ECA has also been involved in institution-building, as part of its technical cooperation activities, in such fields as science and technology, banking and finance, minerals and remote sensing, and planning and management. There are at present a total of 30 such ECA-sponsored technical institutions. ECA also has field projects supported by funding partners on the basis of established project documents that the Commission executes for the benefit of its member States.

Other collaborative arrangements

72. ECA has developed extensive collaborative relationships with the various global entities, regional and subregional organizations involved in economic and social development in Africa. The collaboration with these organizations encompasses various facets of development and extends well beyond norm-setting and technical cooperation activities. Thus, for example, under collaborative arrangements with the Bretton Woods institutions, the World Bank has pledged a financial contribution of \$1 million to ECA's Leadership Fund for Women. ECA and the Bank are also collaborating on research issues of population, food security, environment and infrastructure development, and are jointly undertaking a comprehensive African household survey database. In addition, ECA and the Bank's Economic Development Institute are forging a strong collaboration on training and capacity-building through seminars and workshops on poverty analysis, gender advocacy and knowledge management. The International Monetary Fund (IMF) has indicated interest in helping ECA strengthen its capacities in policy analysis, research and data processing, and the collection of fiscal, monetary and balance-of-payment statistics. These efforts would be facilitated through training at the IMF Institute and through visitor programmes at IMF for ECA staff.

73. ECA expects to collaborate with UNFPA, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), and UNEP to integrate and bring the nexus issues of food security, population and the environment to the forefront of regional and national planning. With the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), the Commission plans to collaborate in the collection and analyses of social and economic data as a tool for monitoring poverty, particularly as it pertains to the socio-economic situation of African children. In the post-Uruguay Round of trade liberalization, Africa faces the challenge of becoming an integral part of the world economy through trade, investment, industrial development and a balanced relationship with transnational corporations. ECA will collaborate closely with UNCTAD and the World Trade Organization to assist African countries in developing and adopting policies to increase regional and external trade, with emphasis on viable strategies for diversifying export products and markets. ECA has signed a memorandum of understanding on collaboration with UNCTAD. The Commission and the International Labour Organization (ILO), who share responsibilities as lead United Nations agencies in poverty reduction for the United Nations System-wide Special Initiative on Africa, will collaborate to promote informal sector and employment-

generating strategies. ECA and the World Health Organization (WHO) will work together by putting forward fiscal policies that benefit health sector development in Africa. They will also strengthen past collaboration in raising awareness about the socio-economic impacts of human immunodeficiency virus/acquired immunodeficiency syndrome (HIV/AIDS). The Commission and the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) will cooperate by utilizing information technology for development, promoting basic education, building the capacities of civil society to ensure good governance, and promoting science and technology exchanges, including South-South cooperation. The Commission's work with the United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO) will centre on private sector and industrial development, as well as on devising programmes at the regional level to strengthen the capacities of member States for trade negotiation and development.

74. In conclusion, the main characteristics of the cooperation between ECA and the United Nations agencies have been based on the fact that they draw on the strengths of each other's organizations; and have sought to avoid duplication of related activities and ensure complementarity.

75. At its recent meeting on 23 and 24 April 1998, the Ministerial Follow-up Committee of the Conference of Ministers responsible for economic and social development and planning considered document E/ECA/MFC.1/2 entitled, "Reform of the regional commissions: relations between ECA, United Nations agencies, regional and subregional organizations in Africa: a note by the Secretariat". Its deliberations of this item covered a number of points such as the need to strengthen coordination among United Nations agencies operating in Africa, as well as between them and African intergovernmental organizations at the regional and subregional levels; the need to take African priorities and specific circumstances fully into account in the ongoing review of the regional commissions; the recognition that Africa's development problems are, in part, due to endogenous factors and that reform measures should address Africa's own responsibilities; and the role of ECA's SRDCs in strengthening the performance of the United Nations system in Africa at the subregional level.

76. The Follow-up Committee emphasized the need to strengthen inter-agency and inter-organizational coordination at the national, subregional and regional levels in Africa. In considering what form a strengthened United Nations inter-agency coordination might take at the regional and subregional levels, the Committee observed that the national resident coordinator system was still far from functioning as intended. It was proposed, therefore, that

much greater consideration needed to be given to an appropriate holistic model for strengthening inter-agency coordination under African conditions, and that this should also look at coordination arrangements at the regional and subregional levels and the interplay between the three levels of coordination – at the regional, subregional and national levels.

77. With regard to strengthening coordination at the regional level, the Committee expressed strong support for the operationalization in Africa of the regional version of the Administrative Committee on Coordination (regional ACC), chaired by ECA. It was observed that proposals to this effect had been presented by the Secretary-General in 1994. It was further observed that such regional arrangements had been established in other regions.

78. The Committee emphasized that the Economic and Social Council review of the regional commissions and the reform of United Nations activities in Africa should take into account Africa's specific circumstances, constraints and development needs in the context of globalization and Africa's continuing sense of marginalization. In this regard, the consensus of the Committee was that the role of ECA in providing various forms of assistance for addressing these problems to African States individually as well as collectively at the regional and subregional levels continued to be as important as ever. The Committee noted that, prior to undertaking wide-ranging programmatic and institutional reforms in 1995, the Commission had carried out a review of Africa's strategic development objectives and priorities at the threshold of the twenty-first century. It was also noted that the Commission is in the process of consulting member States and leading subregional intergovernmental organizations with a view to identifying specific subregional development priorities in each of Africa's five subregions. The Committee observed that member States wished to exercise greater ownership over the operational activities of the agencies of the United Nations system, including those of the specialized agencies, the Bretton Woods institutions and the World Trade Organization.

79. The Committee placed considerable emphasis on the primary role that should be played by ECA's SRDCs in strengthening the coordination and overall performance of the United Nations system in Africa. It was observed that the Conference of Ministers had directed that the SRDCs be strengthened by transferring substantial resources to them and by broadening their mandate to include their serving as facilitators of the integration activities of the United Nations system operating within the subregions. The Committee noted that the Commission was on track in implementing the decisions of the Conference of Ministers on strengthening

the SRDCs. These centres therefore had the capacity to provide effective coordination and team leadership for United Nations operational activities at the subregional level.

E. Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia

80. The reform of the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA), which entailed programming changes and structural reorganization, was initiated in 1994 and continues to be undertaken in 1998 as appropriate. ESCWA reported to the nineteenth session of ESCWA, held in Beirut, 7 and 8 May 1997, on all action taken up to that point (document E/ESCWA/19/5). The positive response of ESCWA member States was clearly stated in Commission resolution 216 (XIX) entitled "Organizational and programme changes and modifications introduced by ESCWA since 1994" (E/1997/39, chap. I), which was adopted by the Economic and Social Council in 1997 (Council resolution 1997/14).

81. The reform of ESCWA included immediate and long-term actions. Immediate measures included reducing the number of subprogrammes from 10 to 5, and adjusting the organizational structure accordingly. This also led to a progressive decrease of activities which became more focused on areas in which ESCWA has a comparative advantage and which reflect the realities of the region, thus allocating resources to the priority areas for the Commission. It further linked more clearly the normative and the operational work. To strengthen relations with its member States and to serve them better, a limited number of intergovernmental bodies were established to ensure a more dynamic involvement of member States in priority-setting and in discussions of the direction of ESCWA. Within the secretariat, due attention was given to management reform, including ensuring changes in staff profile and/or skills as relevant to the work programme. Technological advancement and capacity-building and establishing internal mechanisms to support substantive activities were undertaken.

82. The longer-term reform, which has been ongoing, deals with fine-tuning ESCWA's relationship with other regional organizations based on ESCWA's neutrality as an international organization and addressing the geo-economic problems of the region within the context of an environment of globalization. ESCWA's role of coordinating United Nations activities at the regional level through the Regional Interagency Coordination Committee was strengthened by

adopting a regional integrated follow-up action to the global conferences. Relations with non-United Nations regional and subregional organizations, particularly the League of Arab States (LAS) and the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC), have been further improved; however, they still require additional attention.

Core competencies and functions

83. Throughout its reform process, ESCWA kept in view the five areas of core functions that it had identified for itself: (a) information/data collection, verification and dissemination; (b) policy formulation and analysis; (c) intergovernmental forums; (d) technical support; and (e) coordination at the regional level.

84. ESCWA is gaining status as the principal source of regional statistical data and information in the social and economic fields. Its work in this area allows member States to share information on the basis of standardized definitions and methodologies and to undertake sound analysis of comparative data and information.

85. Regional issues and selected country-specific problems are addressed through analytical work and policy analysis. ESCWA has identified a set of priority areas that are of direct relevance to most member States individually and to all of them collectively. These are water, transport, energy, communication networks, trade, social development and statistics, within a changing regional and global context. In addressing these priority areas, ESCWA has adopted a multisectoral-multi-country (transboundary) approach, as well as an advocacy function.

86. ESCWA also provides an intergovernmental forum, which acts as a source of legislative authority giving programming directives, adopting regional plans of actions, conventions and norms, and advocating the implementation of regional and subregional activities.

87. Through its technical assistance activities, ESCWA ensures synergy between its normative and its operational work. Advisory services and capacity-building provide support to the member States which benefit by the linkage between the normative and the operational. Though technical assistance responds sometimes to specific and immediate needs of member States, it is set within a regional context for development and helps develop the capacity of member States to network among themselves so as to learn from various national experiences.

88. ESCWA promotes coherence of social and economic policies among the member States with the main objective of standard setting and harmonization, exchange of

experience and lessons learned. Owing to its position as the natural link in the global- to country-level continuum, ESCWA is the institution best equipped to bring the global principles and recommendations to the regional level and to transmit the regional perspective to the global debate, as has been clearly demonstrated by the follow-up to global conferences.

89. ESCWA is also responsible for coordinating selected activities among United Nations and non-United Nations organizations active in the region, based on its comparative advantage and its multidisciplinary approach. The normative and operational activities of ESCWA for the follow-up to global conferences and those for the participation of ESCWA member States in the World Trade Organization are built on joint activities between ESCWA and United Nations and non-United Nations organizations (for example, the League of Arab States) operating in the region.

ESCWA cooperation with other bodies

90. In enhancing its cooperation with other bodies, ESCWA extends itself to the other United Nations agencies operating in the region. A special example is its role as the coordinator of the Regional Inter-agency Coordination Group (RICG). Though this forum was initially used for exchange of experience, it has developed into one advocating joint activities, the first of which is the project proposal on Integrated Follow-up to Global Conferences, which is being reviewed by UNDP as its flagship project with ESCWA. Joint action was also taken by the Regional Gender Task Force to provide support to the League of Arab States meeting on follow-up to the Beijing Conference. In addition, ESCWA works towards establishing institutional relationships with the other bodies operating in the region. Besides RICG, ESCWA has signed a number of memoranda of understanding or letters of understanding with various specialized United Nations and non-United Nations agencies, which define the nature of the bilateral cooperation between ESCWA and the agencies concerned. Examples of the organizations concerned include FAO Regional Office for Arab Countries and UNCTAD; the League of Arab States; the Arab Labour Organization; the Arab Planning Institute; the Centre for Environment and Development for Arab States and Europe (CEDARE); and the International Centre for Arid and Dry Areas (ICARDA), just to name a few.

91. At the operational activities level, ESCWA continues to work closely with UNDP, the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM), UNFPA, the League of Arab States and the Arab Gulf Programme for

United Nations Development Organizations (AGFUND) in such areas as human development, gender mainstreaming, eradication of poverty and human settlements. ESCWA plays the coordinating role among these various bodies, and the division of labour is clearly delineated. In terms of the United Nations bodies, ESCWA is the only forum for adopting regional positions and plans of action on an integrated vision of social development. Furthermore to the League of Arab States, which is a forum for ministerial decisions, including the social development area, ESCWA brings the necessary link with the global entities and with the global conferences. ESCWA also cooperates closely with UNCTAD on World Trade Organization issues; being part of the region and with a more thorough and focused knowledge, it makes an important contribution to UNCTAD as well as to the relationship between the member States and World Trade Organization.

92. In the area of economic and social development, ESCWA also works closely with civil society institutions, such as Friedrich-Naumann-Stiftung, the Chamber of Industry and Commerce in Lebanon and the Economic Research Forum for the Middle East, the Islamic Republic of Iran and Turkey, in examining issues of privatization and in advocating useful lessons learned from previous and ongoing experiences. In some of the social areas of concern, it works closely with some of the region's growing number of non-governmental organizations, for instance, the Middle East Committee for the Affairs of the Blind. In recent years, ESCWA has developed a network of relationships with several of the region's premier education and research institutions, such as Cairo University's Institute of Statistical Studies and Research and the National Centre for Social and Criminal Research and Demographic Centre; and Al-Yarmouk University. Establishment of similar relationships of cooperation is envisaged with others, such as Damascus University and Kuwait University.

93. Cooperation with ECE is a good example of ways by which the regional commissions reinforce each other and learn from each other's experiences. Due to the well-established standard-setting function of ECE in the area of transport, ESCWA has joined its relevant mechanisms, such as the United Nations Electronic Data Interchange for Administration, Commerce and Transport (UN/EDIFACT). With ESCWA embarking on standard-setting in this particular area of immediate importance in the region, it will be establishing itself also as the forum that develops and adopts region-wide agreements. The League of Arab States holds the annual conference of the Ministers of Transport, but its concerns are more of a political nature. ESCWA is, in effect, the only technical body dealing with transport, as

demonstrated by the technical assistance provided to GCC on establishing a subregional database on transport.

94. Close working relationships have been established with the United Nations Statistics Division, UNDP, UNICEF and the Centre for Arab Women Training and Research (CAWTAR), a non-governmental organization in the area of gender statistics. ESCWA is the coordinating body in this area and is recognized for its work in the region. In terms of undertaking activities for implementing the International Comparison Programme (ICP) of prices with the World Bank, ESCWA was the natural partner for the World Bank to select in respect of advocating for the issue among hesitant member States, which eventually found many benefits in joining the ICP project.

95. Water, being a critical issue in the region, is an area where much cooperation is needed among interested bodies. The Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC) has been a main supporter of ESCWA in this area, with a clear recognition that ESCWA has the accumulated experience and knowledge for dealing with this important issue. Since ESCWA's work on water promotes the adoption of legal and institutional instruments for management of joint water resources, it has been invited to cooperate with UNESCO and other partners, in convening a meeting on international and comparative law on international waterways.

ESCWA cooperation with other bodies in the field of operational activities

96. ESCWA's operational activities permeates its core functions and impacts on its analytical work, strengthens its relationship with member States and enhances its inputs into joint activities with other United Nations and non-United Nations agencies. Through this work, ESCWA provides advisory services, preparation and management of projects and organization of training activities. In a region that is small and homogenous in many aspects, but that lacks developed economic relations, it is important to create the necessary technical links for strengthening economic relations. Therefore, the technical assistance activities undertaken by ESCWA promote economic cooperation among member States and within the region.

97. With its pool of specialized regional advisers, ESCWA has a core group of varied expertise that can readily provide assistance to member States. More recently, ESCWA has been requested to provide direct technical input into programmes executed by other agencies at the country level. More requests are emanating from UNDP country offices for ESCWA's support to the country programme in areas such as human development, environment, World Trade

Organization agreements, transport and, most of all, statistics. Although regional advisers work at the country level, they place country issues within a regional perspective. Their movement from one country to another brings with it the regional links as well as the relationships with other United Nations agencies that can benefit the member States. Similarly, both field operations and training workshops, which are implemented nationally within a regional project, often require the joint efforts of more than one United Nations agency. Successful outcome and results are shared and transmitted within the organizations of the system.

98. Since ESCWA meets biennially and does not have a Commission session in 1998, its Advisory Committee of Ambassadors met on 30 March 1998 to consider the status and implementation of the reform process of ESCWA. In light of General Assembly resolution 52/12 B and the Economic and Social Council's review of the reform of the commissions in 1998, the meeting considered the report entitled "Programme and organizational changes and modifications made by ESCWA since 1994" (E/ESCWA/19/5), which was presented to the session of the Commission in 1997. The Advisory Committee decided to bring up anew, with the respective Governments of its member countries, the issue of ESCWA's reform. At its reconvened meeting of 21 April 1998, the Advisory Committee reconfirmed the content of Council resolution 1997/14 on ESCWA reform, in which the Council called for the granting to the Commission, within the framework of the reform of the United Nations system, of a broader mandate for carrying out its activities, including those related to regional technical cooperation projects. The Advisory Committee also expressed satisfaction with the continued implementation of reform initiatives of the Commission, and noted that the Commission would review the developments at its next session in 1999.

II. Trends and activities

A. Work of the commissions in normative and operational activities, including follow-up activities to recent global conferences

99. The regional commissions share a common mandate for raising the level of economic development and cooperation among the countries of their respective regions and between them and other parts of the world. As such, their activities are primarily region-specific – tailored to suit

the changing requirements of their regional membership. They serve as a forum for articulating regional perspectives on global issues and vice versa. Their analytical work has twofold objectives: to provide information and views on socio-economic developments in the region, and to promote policy debates and exchange of experience in those fields. Their proximity to the member countries has conditioned them to orient their operational activities towards support of those countries' regular activities within a symbiotic relationship of mutual enrichment.

100. At the same time, as part of the institutional structure of the United Nations, the regional commissions carry out the relevant global mandates emanating from the General Assembly and the Economic and Social Council, which, as reflected in the roles assigned to them, also include follow-up to global conferences. Some significant developments in this respect during the period under review are also touched upon. (For a more detailed account and analytical coverage, see report of the Secretary-General on integrated coordinated implementation and follow-up of major United Nations conferences and summits (E/1998/19)).

1. Economic Commission for Europe

101. The major activities of ECE can be grouped into the following categories: development of common legal instruments, norms and standards; activities relating to policy and analytical issues; coordination, harmonization and development of statistical data; and operational activities.

102. In the area of norms and standards, ECE has continued its work in the development of normative instruments, thereby fostering regional cooperation, facilitating economic integration and promoting policy convergence. For example, in the field of environment, such work aims at solving transboundary problems and promoting the implementation of environmentally sound national policies. In trade, it helps to reduce transaction costs while enlarging the market by reducing technical barriers to trade. In transport, it facilitates the mobility of persons and goods, and improves the security of transport of persons and the environmental performance of transport systems. In statistics, standard principles and concepts contribute to common understanding and promote data reliability and comparability in the region.

103. In the area of environment, under the Convention on Long-range Transboundary Air Pollution, two new protocols have been negotiated: the protocol on heavy metals, which sets emission ceilings and limit values for specified emission sources, as well as requirements for phasing out leaded petrol; and the protocol on persistent organic pollutants

(POPs), either setting limits on their emissions or establishing bans or phase-out timetables. The latter protocol is expected to provide an input to work on a worldwide convention on POPs to start in the summer of 1998. Both of these two new protocols are expected to be adopted and opened for signature at the special session of the Executive Body for the Convention on Long-range Transboundary Air Pollution at ministerial level in Aarhus (Denmark) on 24 June 1998.

104. Under the Convention on the Protection and Use of Transboundary Watercourses and International Lakes, preparation is under way, in collaboration with WHO's Regional Office for Europe, for a new protocol on the prevention, control and reduction of water-related diseases which will be submitted to the Ministerial Conference on Health and Environment for adoption and signature.

105. A new convention on access to information, public participation in decision-making and access to justice in environmental matters has been prepared and will be submitted to the fourth Conference "Environment for Europe", in June 1998, for adoption and signature by the countries.

106. In the field of transport, ECE continued to develop and amend international legally binding instruments on a number of transport issues. For example, more than 50 amendments were made to the 104 existing ECE Regulations for the Construction of Vehicles, in order to incorporate new technical developments and new demand for increased safety and environmental protection. The TIR Convention, designed to facilitate international transit traffic of goods, is being revised and the first phase has been completed.

107. The Convention on Customs Treatment of Containers Used in International Transport entered into force in January 1998 following ratification by seven countries and the EU. In addition, a number of agreements were signed and entered into force, namely, an agreement establishing the European network of inland waterways, signed by 14 countries; a new agreement for the adoption of uniform conditions for technical inspections of vehicles, signed by 22 countries; and a protocol establishing uniform infrastructure and performance requirements for combined transport on inland waterways, signed by 12 countries. Furthermore, a new legal instrument concerning the international carriage of dangerous goods by inland waterways (ADN) was under preparation and seven new ECE regulations for the construction of vehicles to be annexed to the 1958 Agreement were prepared and adopted.

108. In the area of trade, 14 new standardized electronic messages have been added (containing information in

support of activities in accounting, banking, customs, health care, transportation, sales and social administration) within the framework of UN/EDIFACT, bringing the total number of messages to over 150. Work has also been launched to develop trade facilitation recommendations, in particular on audit-based controls and risk analysis for border clearance. The ECE European Convention on International Commercial Arbitration dating from 1961 and signed by 29 Governments to date will be reviewed. An international meeting is scheduled for September 1998.

109. In the area of agriculture, ECE agricultural quality standards were revised/agreed regarding selected fruits, vegetables and meat products.

110. In the area of energy, ECE has developed a Glossary of National Gas Reserves: Exploration, Exploitation, Economics; and the United Nations Framework Classification for Reserves/Resources: Solid Fuels and Mineral Commodities. The Classification, developed with the support of more than 60 countries from Europe, Asia, Latin America, North America and Africa, and whose endorsement by ECE was welcomed by the Economic and Social Council in July 1997 (Council decision 1997/226), is a universal and internationally applicable scheme that is expected to facilitate the reassessment of available resources/reserves using market-based criteria and to promote, in the context of globalization, projects, particularly in transition and developing countries, with a view to attracting investments for their commercialization. Currently, ECE in cooperation with other regional commissions is taking steps to ensure its worldwide practical application.

111. In statistics, ECE has established, in close collaboration with the Statistical Office of the European Communities (Eurostat) and ECE member countries, a set of detailed recommendations for census taking in the region. These recommendations will support the undertaking of national population and housing censuses in the 2000 round which is well under way in the countries of the region. This set of recommendations has also been adopted by Eurostat on behalf of EU.

112. In terms of policy and analysis, ECE carries out in-depth studies of economic situations in countries of the region, particularly those with economies in transition, which are to be found in the *Economic Survey of Europe*. Following the ECE reform, the *Survey* is now an annual volume of three issues. The first issue of each volume focuses on developments in the ECE region in the past and coming year, with special emphasis on the transition economies and their relations with the rest of the world; it

also deals with selected structural and institutional aspects of the transition process. The second addresses selected topics including other areas of ECE's work. The third focuses on the trade and external financial relations of the transition economies, replacing the *Economic Bulletin for Europe*. In addition, an annual seminar focusing on one selected economic issue is to be organized immediately prior to each annual session of the Commission. The 1998 seminar focused on enterprise and bank restructuring in the transition economies, the outcome of which will be reflected in the second issue of the 1998 *Economic Survey of Europe*.

113. In environment, ECE contributes to policy formulation through the "Environment for Europe" process, the regional promotion of Agenda 21,⁹ environmental performance reviews and the development and implementation of regional legally binding instruments. The environmental performance review (EPR) programme produces policy recommendations for individual ECE member countries in transition. Since April 1997, Estonia, Slovenia and the Republic of Moldova have received and implemented EPR recommendations. EPR publications relating to environmental policies and management during the reporting period have covered Slovenia, the Republic of Moldova and Lithuania.

114. In trade, ECE has led the way in studying the impact of norms and standards on the fluidity of international trade and a study is being prepared for a debate on this issue in 1998. A major study was published, in 1997, on structural ownership changes in the chemical industry in countries in transition.

115. In energy, the intergovernmental debates on policy issues are supported by analytical studies, particularly in the fields of energy situation and prospects (with a specific study on Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) countries), gas (interconnection of networks, ground floor storage, natural gas resources) and energy efficiency (labelling and standards).

116. In the timber sector, a study on markets for certified forest products has been initiated, touching on the highly sensitive issue of certification of sustainably managed forest products. It will be published in the course of 1998.

117. The Committee on Human Settlements has focused on specific policy issues based on best practices and case studies and has published an analysis of human settlements trends in Central and Eastern Europe. In order to obtain advice on the organization of policy debates and exchange of experiences in human settlements issues, the Committee has established an advisory board consisting of experts from the private sector and non-governmental organizations

dealing with housing, planning and land administration, and local authorities.

118. Concerning coordination, harmonization and development of statistical data, the 1997 plenary session of the ECE Conference of European Statisticians further strengthened the coordination of statistical activities throughout the region and beyond, mainly through the Integrated Presentation of Programme of Work of about 25 international statistical institutes active in the region including the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), Eurostat and all the major global organizations, and the streamlining of statistical data collection.

119. In line with ECE's reform, the database on macroeconomic and other statistics is being consolidated, in order to provide data support to the three issues of the *Economic Survey of Europe* and to other international organizations relying on ECE for this data collection.

120. In the field of timber, ECE is taking the lead in creating the world's primary statistical database on the extent and condition of temperate and boreal forests. With its partner, FAO, it is carrying out the Temperate and Boreal Forest Resource Assessment 2000, for publication in 1999. These data, to be made available as a publication and on the Internet, will be an important input to the analysis of the progress of sustainable forest management in the region, as requested by the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development. In particular, preliminary results will be submitted to the Ministerial Conference on the Protection of Forests in Europe in June 1998.

121. The development, harmonization and coordination of statistical data feature also in a number of other areas of ECE's work, including environment, transport, trade and energy.

122. Operational activities are carried out in support of the regular activities of ECE. The ECE team of regional advisers undertakes advisory missions and provides technical assistance, mainly to countries in transition, in problem identification, project formulation and implementation of specific projects and programmes. ECE also organizes some 40 training workshops, seminars and study tours.

123. Operational activities organized with and for subregional groupings and initiatives have a cost-effective impact as they benefit all countries that are members of these entities. Cooperation with subregional groupings and initiatives also promotes greater awareness and use of instruments developed at intergovernmental level within ECE, and precludes the development by these groupings of

competing/conflicting policies or instruments which would create confusion at governmental level. In the course of 1997, operational activities undertaken in cooperation with, or in the framework of, subregional organizations or initiatives have increased. They are focused on environment, transport and border crossing, sustainable energy, trade facilitation, investment promotion and support to small and medium-sized enterprises.

124. Among the other activities organized by ECE, a number of events are noteworthy:

(a) Ministerial Regional Conference on Transport and the Environment (Vienna, November 1997) which adopted a Declaration outlining a set of commitments for promoting sustainable transport systems in the region, and a Programme of Joint Action, containing a corresponding set of policies and measures to be taken at the national and international levels;

(b) Preparation of the Fourth Pan-European Ministerial Conference "Environment for Europe", which will take place in Aarhus from 23 to 25 June 1998;

(c) Two peer review meetings, with ministerial participation, each having taken place following the environmental performance reviews undertaken in Slovenia and the Republic of Moldova;

(d) Forum on the Prospects of Promoting Foreign Direct Investments in Transition Economies, organized in cooperation with the World Bank in September 1997 in Geneva;

(e) Preparation of the Ministerial Conference on Protection of Forests in Europe (June 1998), which will review progress in sustainable forest management since the previous Ministerial Conference, in 1993, and set the directions for future international work;

(f) Regional population meeting, to be held in Budapest towards the end of 1998, which will review and appraise the implementation, in the ECE region, of the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development¹⁰ and the European Population Conference recommendations.

125. In respect of interregional cooperation, in the field of transport, the ECE secretariat cooperated closely with the ESCAP secretariat in acquainting ESCAP member Governments with the international legal instruments developed by ECE in the field of transport and in assisting those countries in acceding to those legal instruments.

126. In trade facilitation, ECE and ESCAP have continued to develop a computer-based training programme on

electronic data interchange (EDI) and UN/EDIFACT. A workshop on Trade Facilitation and UN/EDIFACT was organized in Beirut in collaboration with ESCWA. A mail server has also been set up by ECE to facilitate information-sharing among regional commissions in this area. ESCAP and ESCWA regularly participate in CEFACT meetings, representing their respective region.

127. With respect to follow-up to global conferences, and specifically as a regional follow-up to the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, the participants in a consultative meeting among regional commissions, recently held in New York, endorsed the project of a pilot regional workshop which ECE would hold in the fourth quarter of this year in order to: (a) review all country and EU reports submitted to the Commission on Sustainable Development and other relevant document; (b) provide an inventory of best practices and, if appropriate, an assessment; (c) review national priorities and provide analysis as to the extent that national priorities coincide with regional priorities and concur with priorities of the Commission.

128. The results of this pilot project would be submitted to the Commission on Sustainable Development at its seventh session, in 1999, and would be shared with other regional commissions.

129. In line with a recommendation of Agenda 21 addressed to the regional commissions, the ECE organized a Ministerial Conference on Transport and the Environment which took place in November 1997 in Vienna. A Declaration, outlining a set of commitments for promoting sustainable transport systems in the region, and a Programme of Joint Action, containing a corresponding set of policies and measures to be taken at the national and international levels, were adopted and formally signed by 35 ECE member States. In addition, two legally binding agreements on specific areas related to transport and the environment were opened for signature.

130. The Conference has succeeded in showing that reconciling transport and the environment is becoming a political priority. The follow-up mechanisms cover both the national and the regional levels. For the latter, ECE is requested to ensure an overall monitoring of the Programme of Joint Action through joint meetings of the bureaux of the Inland Transport Committee and of the Committee on Environmental Policy, to which representatives of other European and worldwide institutions will be invited.

131. The ECE secretariat undertook an initiative to conduct a survey of the follow-up to the United Nations Conference on Human Settlements (Habitat II) and the implementation

of the Habitat Agenda¹¹ by member countries. The survey shows that the Agenda is mainly used for awareness-raising and dissemination of information in the countries and that norms, policies and related projects continue without direct reference to the Habitat II process. Actually, ECE develops activities covered by the Agenda but focusing on priority issues for countries in transition, namely, housing reform, land administration, urban renewal and sustainable human settlements development.

132. The most important follow-up decision taken by ECE after Beijing, and which is featured in its reform, was to mainstream the gender perspective in the work programme of its principal subsidiary bodies. Initial intergovernmental discussion have already occurred in the areas of human settlements, environment, trade and timber. Support to gender statistics in ECE countries is already established on a regular basis.

133. An inter-agency meeting among United Nations and non-United Nations organizations actors on gender issues in the region will be convened by ECE by the end of this year in order to start the preparations for the ECE regional input to the five-year global review of the Beijing Conference. In particular, this meeting will be an opportunity to update a matrix established at a similar meeting in 1996, which outlined the main activities of these organizations in the areas of concern identified in both the regional platforms for action and the global Platforms for Action.¹² This proved to be a valuable tool for all the organizations concerned, helping them to secure transparency, build up complementarities and synergies, and identify new possibilities of cooperation.

134. ECE is currently making arrangements to take part in the global quinquennial review and appraisal of the implementation of the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development. Preparations are under way to hold a Regional Population Meeting in Budapest, by the end of 1998, in order to review and appraise the implementation, in the ECE region, of the Programme of Action and the European Population Conference recommendations. The meeting will consider all salient population issues and policies since 1993 and adopt a report on the implementation of the Programme of Action and the recommendations. The focus of the meeting, will be on the following themes: (a) low fertility, including its determinants and future prospects; (b) mortality, with special emphasis on the falling and stagnating life expectancy in countries in transition and on old-age mortality throughout the region; and (c) population ageing, including its dynamics and its social and economic implications at the family, community and societal levels.

2. Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific

135. The recent financial crisis that has affected several Asian economies has served to slow down the rapid pace of growth characteristic of the Asia-Pacific region in recent decades. The crisis has accentuated the need for closer cooperation among the region's economies in the face of the challenges posed by globalization, as well as the need for greater assistance to be rendered to the more vulnerable groups of countries and weaker segments of societies within countries.

136. The ESCAP secretariat has been mindful of the differences in the levels of development among the members and associate members of the Commission, and has continued to play a catalytic role through a mix of analytical and operational activities in spreading the growth momentum, to ensure that growth occurs in a sustainable manner, and that wealth is more equitably distributed so as to improve the quality of life of some 830 million of the region's poor.

137. The *Economic and Social Survey of Asia and the Pacific, 1997*,¹³ for instance, examines the opportunities and challenges that the ESCAP region faces as it approaches the twenty-first century in the face of the intensifying processes of globalization and regionalization. Many of the factors driving these processes are beyond the control of individual developing countries. The key policy question is how to optimize the benefits of their participation in these processes. The benefits and risks of integration into the international and regional economy, focusing on foreign trade and external finance including foreign direct investment (FDI), are analysed in the *Survey*. It also examines the policy perspectives for promoting growth with equity in the context of emerging developments.

138. In the area of regional economic cooperation in the wake of the recent financial crisis, a High-level Seminar on Managing Capital Flows: National and International Action will be held in Bangkok in June 1998, jointly organized by ESCAP, the World Bank, IMF and the Asian Development Bank. Other analytical work undertaken by ESCAP has involved monitoring, review and assessment of macroeconomic issues, trends and policies at the regional and subregional levels, and analysis of challenges and opportunities in the economic and social sectors arising from globalization and liberalization. In operational terms, ESCAP has provided technical assistance to the Bangladesh-India-Myanmar-Sri Lanka-Thailand Economic Cooperation (BIMST-EC) initiative by formulating a programme for the development of cooperation in the priority sectors of trade,

investment and industry, technology, infrastructure and transport, tourism, energy, agriculture and human resources development. Another important initiative was the Special Programme for the Economies of Central Asia (SPECA), which is being formulated jointly by ESCAP and ECE and seeks to facilitate the economic integration of the countries of Central Asia into both Europe and Asia as well as to promote cooperation among those countries. The Republics of Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan signed the joint Declaration on SPECA in March 1998. With ECA, ESCAP is seeking to promote interregional cooperation in the areas of trade and investment.

139. ESCAP has provided technical assistance to the members and associate members in the important areas of investment promotion, especially in the least developed countries, promotion of technology flows, industrial complementarities and relocation of industries, promotion of environmentally sound technologies, and technical and industrial skills development. ESCAP organized the Meeting of Ministers of Industry and Technology in Bangkok in February 1998, which adopted a Ministerial Declaration and a regional action plan emphasizing the need for further cooperation and indicating priority areas of action for strengthening regional cooperation in future.

140. In the area of poverty alleviation, ESCAP undertook both analytical and operational activities, the latter through provision of direct technical assistance and advisory services covering the following fields: growth strategies and structural reforms; human resources development; social development; population issues; rural development; human settlements; women in development; and industry and technology. In collaboration with the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) and UNDP, a project entitled "SAARC Seven Sisters: district development coordination and improved poverty project design" was implemented. Operational support in the form of a series of technical assistance activities were undertaken to support initiatives to attain the goals and targets of the Agenda for Action on Social Development in the ESCAP Region and the Asian and Pacific Decade of Disabled Persons, as well as to promote the aims and objectives of General Assembly resolution 50/141 on the International Year of Older Persons: towards a society for all ages.

141. Given the growing recognition in the region of the importance of transport and communication linkages in promoting the flow of goods and services, ESCAP has continued to promote accession by member countries to international land transport facilitation conventions. Technical assistance was provided to subregional organizations: ASEAN in the areas of multimodal transport

development and transport of dangerous goods; ECO in international transport development; and SAARC in the improvement of subregional transport systems and facilitation measures.

142. ESCAP's institutional structure in the field of statistics was strengthened through the retention of the Committee on Statistics and agreement on terms of reference for its Bureau. With regard to harmonization, coordination and development of statistical data, emphasis has been placed on coordination with regional and international statistical agencies, mainly through the ACC machinery and the ESCAP Committee on Statistics. Initiatives were undertaken to collaborate with UNEFA on population statistics, the World Bank on ICP, the Asian Development Bank on environment statistics and national accounts, and IMF on data dissemination standards, which assumed growing importance in the wake of the Asian financial crisis. The Committee's Working Group of Statistical Experts also drew attention to the Year 2000 (Y2K) problem in computers, which threatens to disrupt not only statistical operations but also the activities of many public sector organizations. Most countries in the region appear ill-prepared to tackle the issue.

143. In close coordination with ECE, the secretariat is planning to conduct a joint seminar on the United Nations Framework Classification for Reserves/Resources: Solid Fuels and Mineral Commodities, for the countries of the Asia and Pacific region, subject to the availability of funding.

144. With respect to follow-up activities to recent global conferences, ESCAP, as mandated by the General Assembly, has actively sought to pursue recommendations for action at the regional level arising from decisions adopted at recent global conferences. It is expected that this role will be continued and further reinforced in the months to come.

145. The Fifth Asian and Pacific Ministerial Conference on Social Development, held at Manila in November 1997, reviewed the progress in the implementation of the Agenda for Action on Social Development in the ESCAP Region, in the context of the Programme of Action of the World Summit for Social Development.¹⁴ The Conference adopted the Manila Declaration on Accelerated Implementation of the Agenda for Action on Social Development in the ESCAP Region, which contained recommendations for achieving the interrelated goals of eradicating poverty, expansion of employment and enhancement of social integration. In implementing ESCAP's social development programmes and activities, particular emphasis has been placed on an integrated approach as well as on strengthening the role of non-governmental organizations and civil society.

146. Population issues continue to be of central concern to countries of the region. Through its research and advocacy role, ESCAP has sought to increase awareness of the internationally agreed paradigm shift and new directions in population policy formulation and programme implementation as a result of the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development. ESCAP has provided training and advisory services to member countries in order to support implementation of the Bali Declaration on Population and Sustainable Development adopted by the Fourth Asian and Pacific Population Conference held in 1992, and the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development. A High-Level Meeting to Review the Implementation of the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development and the Bali Declaration on Population and Sustainable Development was held at Bangkok in March 1998. ESCAP also rendered technical support to member countries in the development of national plans of action on the adaptation of existing plans to implement the Beijing Platform for Action, adopted at the Fourth World Conference on Women in 1995.

147. Significant progress has been made in the region in implementing Agenda 21 of the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, including the development of a framework for the North-East Asian Subregional Programme of Environmental Cooperation, aimed at promoting technical cooperation and information exchanges on environmental issues of particular concern to China, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Japan, Mongolia, the Republic of Korea and the Russian Federation. ESCAP formulated a regional networking mechanism for regional cooperation in the implementation of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change.¹⁵ Through this mechanism and in collaboration with the secretariat of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, a review of issues relating to climate change and potential rise in sea level was conducted. The outcome of that review was submitted to the Conference of the Parties to the Convention, at its third session, held at Kyoto, Japan, in December 1997.

148. ESCAP has also started preparation for the Fourth Ministerial Conference on Environment and Development in Asia and the Pacific in the year 2000. Under the Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States,¹⁶ the fourth session of the Special Body on Pacific Island Developing Countries was held by ESCAP in April 1997, in cooperation with the South Pacific Regional Environmental Programme (SPREP). That

session focused on issues of trade and investment affecting the prospects of these vulnerable countries in the Pacific.

149. Both economic and population growth in recent years have put pressure on the natural resources in the region, often leading to unsustainable methods of usage and exploitation. Growing concern over environmental degradation has led ESCAP to promote national efforts in establishing sustainable policies for natural resources development and management. For example, several meetings were held to consider the issues and options relating to energy infrastructure policies and pricing, the use of clean coal technologies and policies that encourage sustainable energy development, such as energy efficiency and fuel switching. ESCAP has also been actively promoting the development of a regional strategic approach to freshwater resources, which have become a major area of concern.

3. Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean

150. The activities carried out by ECLAC since the last report, took place in a context of moderate economic recovery and adaptation of the regional economies to relevant trends and events taking place in the world economy. Within this context, ECLAC collaborated with member States in the comprehensive analysis of development, assisting in the design, monitoring and evaluation of public policies, and providing the resulting relevant operational services in the fields of specialized information, technical assistance, training and support for regional and international cooperation.

151. Consolidating its role as one of the most important sources of information on macroeconomic and social trends in the countries of the region, ECLAC achieved during this period important progress in timely issuance of one of its main publications, *Economic Survey of Latin America and the Caribbean*. The inclusion of the most up-to-date information in the *Survey* makes it one of the most useful and sought-after publications by both policy makers and economic agents in the region and in the rest of the world.

152. Coming out with the *Survey* in the fourth quarter with preliminary information on the first eight months of the year for every country in the region has made it possible to phase out the *Economic Panorama* which used to be published in September, as an advance, with preliminary information on the first semester for only 10 countries. This resulted in important savings in resources.

153. ECLAC also published the *Preliminary Overview of the Economy of Latin America and the Caribbean 1997*,¹⁷

which included information on the repercussions of the Asian crisis in the region and on the impact of the meteorological phenomena known as El Niño on the economic activity; the *Statistical Yearbook for Latin America and the Caribbean 1997*,¹⁸ published in February 1998, presenting a selection, updated to the end of December, of the main statistical series on economic and social trends in the countries of the region; and the *Social Panorama of Latin America 1997*,¹⁹ presenting the most relevant aspects of the social evolution in the region, particularly those associated with the social equity dimension.

154. In August 1997, the new version of ECLAC's Internet site was launched, featuring a more user-friendly design and a complete new content structure, which includes the most important reports, as well as details of conferences, seminars and research projects.

155. In terms of analytical activities, the secretariat continued carrying out programme-focused and multidisciplinary works, applying its comprehensive approach to the study of the choices and factors that determine the economic and social development of the countries in the region. In doing so, ECLAC has paid particular attention to emerging issues in the world and the efforts deployed by the regional economies to adapt to them. In the area of development financing, for example, in addition to the study of issues and policies that have simultaneous social and financial/economic implications, such as reforms in the pension and health provision systems, the secretariat has dwelled on the macroeconomic impact of international capital flows in developing economies.

156. In January 1998, ECLAC, jointly with OECD, published a study on large flows of capital into the region since 1990, and on policy guidelines as to how developing countries can secure greater benefits from such capital inflows without increasing the risks for crisis. Addressing the need for a comprehensive assessment of the reforms in public finances carried out in the region since the beginning of the decade and with the intention of providing member States with a forum for discussing policy guidelines, the secretariat proposed that the substantive debates of the Commission's twenty-seventh session (Aruba, 11-16 May 1998) be devoted to this matter. As a consequence, the main document submitted to the session, entitled *The Fiscal Covenant: Strengths, Weaknesses, Challenges*, dealt with fiscal administration public finance and its relationship with political institutions.

157. The secretariat continued to undertake analysis of the industrial restructuring process and the design of policies to enhance the competitiveness of countries in the region. This

included in-depth studies of the impact of economic liberalization on the manufacturing sector at large as well as on some other sectors; the restructuring experiences of some strategic sectors; and the development potential for natural resource-based clusters. As a result of ECLAC's efforts to reach all relevant social actors in the region, technical assistance activities were carried out for promoting innovation and competitiveness in the Latin America and Caribbean business sector.

158. In the area of social development, the secretariat paid special attention to policies for overcoming the prevailing conditions of poverty and social inequity presented within the context of moderate economic recovery experienced by the countries of the region. This entailed analysis leading to important modifications in social policies, acknowledging the limits facing the State in carrying out, on its own, the necessary improvements in programme delivery, and encouraging the participation of civil society in the financing and execution of social programmes. As part of its effort to address important emerging issues, ECLAC began a research programme aimed at assisting policy formulation in the fight against the use of illicit drugs.

159. In the area of regional integration and cooperation, ECLAC continued assisting Governments in the analysis of conceptual as well as practical issues arising from the regional integration process under way in the region. The activities in this area, which were not limited to commercial issues, included the analysis of infrastructure issues, particularly transportation and energy, as well as the social and institutional dimensions of regional integration.

160. In cooperation with the Organization of American States (OAS) and the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB), ECLAC continued its assistance to Governments in the implementation of the new hemispheric agenda resulting from the integration dynamic within the framework of the Americas Summit. The Commission has been particularly active in the working groups dealing with competition, services and access to markets by smaller economies. At the request of the Central American Governments, ECLAC prepared a proposal for adapting the subregional institutional capacity to the present and future challenges of the integration process. This proposal was the basis for the Panama II Declaration of the Central American Head of States, of July 1997.

161. ECLAC continued to undertake activities dealing with the interface aspects of regional integration and international cooperation. ECLAC produced the second edition of *Panorama de la inserción internacional* which included analysis of global trends affecting the integration of Latin

America and the Caribbean in the world economy and evolution of the regional integration process.

162. The publication of several books produced by the secretariat by two prestigious publishing houses demonstrates the relevance of ECLAC's work and the demand for the Commission's products among the public at large. With the intention of achieving further improvements in the services provided to the region, ECLAC commissioned at the beginning of 1998 an external evaluation for its publications programme, on the basis of which a new strategy will be implemented.

163. In addition to the training elements of most of ECLAC's technical assistance activities, formal training activities were provided through five international courses organized by the Latin America and Caribbean Institute for Economic and Social Planning (ILPES) in local and regional development, public policy reform, public administration and project management, benefiting 140 professionals from the region and other developing regions.

164. With respect to follow-up to global conferences, ECLAC convened the First Regional Conference in Follow-up to the World Summit for Social Development (6-9 April, São Paulo, Brazil). The main conference report, entitled *The Equity Gap: Latin America, the Caribbean and the Social Summit*,²⁰ analysed existing conditions of poverty, employment and social integration, and proposed additional guidelines on policies designed to facilitate the full realization of the Summit commitments. With the adoption of a document entitled "The São Paulo Consensus", the Governments of Latin America and the Caribbean renewed their commitment to move forward in the realization of the objectives agreed on at the Summit.

165. At ECLAC's twenty-sixth session, its Sessional Ad Hoc Committee on Population and Development reviewed progress achieved in the implementation of the Latin American and Caribbean Regional Plan of Action on Population and Development, adopted in pursuance of the International Conference on Population and Development. ECLAC/CELADE reviewed recent socio-demographic trends and developments in the region; population policies; and regional and subregional activities carried out in the sphere of the Regional Plan. The focus of the Committee at its meeting in May 1998 was on reproductive health and poverty.

166. ECLAC's follow-up activities to the Beijing Conference are aimed at the implementation both of the Regional Programme of Action for the Women of Latin America and the Caribbean, 1995-2001 and of the Platform for Action. The activities of the Presiding Officers of the

Regional Conference on the Integration of Women into the Economic and Social Development of Latin America and the Caribbean were reinforced. At the seventh session of the Regional Conference (19-21 November 1997, Santiago, Chile), delegates adopted the "Consensus of Santiago" which outlines measures aimed at increasing gender equality over the next three years.

167. ECLAC organized a Caribbean Ministerial Meeting on the Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States (Barbados, 10-14 November 1997). At this meeting, representatives of 22 States, and intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations agreed on priority actions and stressed the need for a properly constituted coordinating mechanism. Member Governments requested the ECLAC and Caribbean Community (CARICOM) secretariats to act as interim secretariat and to establish an inter-agency group to support it.

4. Economic Commission for Africa

168. ECA completed its transition to a new programme structure of five subprogrammes, accelerated the decentralization of activities and staff deployment to its subregional development centres (SRDCs) and launched its new intergovernmental structure during the period under review. The first of the new bodies in the Commission's intergovernmental machinery to be convened was the Ministerial Follow-up Committee of the Conference of Ministers responsible for economic and social development and planning which held its first meeting on 23 and 24 April 1998. The main item in its agenda was the report prepared by the secretariat of the Commission pursuant to General Assembly resolution 52/12B on the reform of the United Nations.

169. Promoting the utilization of appropriate scientific and technological techniques so as to facilitate agricultural and environmental transition in Africa is a major priority in ECA's work programme. To this end, ECA hosted the meeting of an ad hoc group of experts on science and technology for food security and sustainable development. This meeting articulated critical science and technology issues facing the region and launched ECA's science and technology network for Africa.

170. ECA organized two national workshops on promotion of informal sector development in Ethiopia and Zambia, as part of a broader effort in the development of developing various aspects of the private sector in Africa. These workshops brought together the various stakeholders, so as to foster partnership between informal sector operators and

government officials. A major study on reconciling indigenous informal and formal micro-financing systems and practice in Africa was undertaken. This study covered the following African countries: Cameroon, Egypt, Gabon, the Gambia, Ghana, Togo, Uganda and Zambia. An African Centre for Civil Society (ACCS) was established at ECA in 1997. The Centre will promote popular participation and strengthen civil society organizations (CSOs) in Africa; serve as a repository of relevant and timely information, both from within and outside Africa on issues related to civil society in development and governance; facilitate effective and programme-based linkages between African CSOs and the international development community; and help African CSOs establish networks at regional and subregional levels.

171. ECA's work in the area of harnessing information for development included the publication of the African statistical yearbook; compendium of intra-African trade-related foreign statistics, 1997; a technical report on best practices in the formulation of statistical development plans; and a Directory of the Committee on African Statistical Development Internet Communications. As part of the implementation of the African Information Society Initiative (AISII), ECA convened the first meeting of the African Technical Advisory Committee on AISII, and participated in the meeting of Partnership for Information and Communication Technologies in Africa.

172. Various activities aimed at facilitating and enhancing the process of regional integration were undertaken. In particular, ECA conducted a critical review of what has been achieved in furthering the objectives of the programme for the second United Nations Transport and Communications Decade in Africa (UNTACDA II). In addition, ECA organized the eleventh meeting of the Conference of African Ministers of Transport and Communications in Cairo, Egypt in November 1997. The Conference adopted a resolution that called on member States to coordinate their actions in order to implement realistic transport policies; and harmonize conditions of competition among different transport modes.

173. ECA also organized the second meeting of the Regional Conference of African Ministers responsible for the development and utilization of minerals and energy resources in Durban, South Africa. A major outcome of the Conference was the Durban Declaration which embodied commitments by member States to promote mineral and mineral development strategies through enhanced cooperation among member States.

174. The subregional development centres of ECA, located in the five subregions of the continent, intensified efforts in providing technical support to and cooperating with the

regional economic communities; facilitating networking and information exchange between Governments, civil society and private sector; and strengthening ECA's outreach in the subregions.

175. In support of the implementation of the United Nations System-wide Special Initiative on Africa (UN-SIA), ECA focused mainly on the following five priority areas: education, health, governance, population and information technology. In the area of harnessing information technology for development (HITD), ECA prepared training modules for planners and decision makers on the importance of AISII; developed case studies of best-policy practices providing an enabling environment for development information and communication infrastructure; and participated in the symposium on the HITD/AISII for Global Knowledge Conference. ECA co-organized with the World Bank a global connectivity conference to build capacities of African members States to plan and negotiate new connectivity technologies. ECA and UNDP, under the United Nations Special Initiative, have a mandate to lead consultations on governance reform, coordinate programmes for implementation and mobilize resources and political support for good governance. They both co-sponsored the first Africa governance forum held in July 1997. Under the joint leadership of the World Bank, UNESCO and ECA, the United Nations Special Initiative has demonstrated substantial progress in the education sector. A high-level meeting convened by UNESCO discussed the Mozambique Education Sector Strategy. The ECA/United Nations Special Initiative secretariat team convened a consultation meeting on the problem of redressing the image of Africa, a key focus of the Communication Strategy for Africa. ECA has reinforced its collaborative arrangements with WHO in the context of its new strategic directions and of the United Nations Special Initiative. In this connection, an ECA/WHO joint project on the role of local government in health is being prepared.

176. Within the context of follow-up to global conferences, ECA put great emphasis on the economic and social empowerment of women in Africa. ECA undertook measures to increase women's awareness of international and national human rights instruments to enable them defend their rights and to disseminate information on progress made on the situation of women in the critical areas of the global and African platforms for action. In pursuance of these objectives, ECA conducted six national surveys in the Eastern and Western African subregions to assess the level of women's awareness of their human and legal rights and the extent to which they enjoyed them. Subsequently, a seminar was held in Lusaka, Zambia, in April 1998, which

brought together non-governmental organizations and government representatives from East Africa who are working in the area of human rights to devise concrete strategies for partnerships to increase women's access to legal services.

177. ECA organized two subregional meetings, for West Africa in November 1997 and Central Africa in May 1998, to review progress in the implementation of the global and regional platforms for action as part of follow-up to the Fourth World Conference on Women. Several major publications were issued to promote information on gender issues. These included publications on strategies for promoting legal literacy in Africa; strategies for promoting a favourable legal environment for women's access to productive resources; national government and selected non-governmental organization machineries on women in Africa; roster of African women experts; guidelines for preparing national reports on the implementation of the platforms for action; and traditional and cultural practices harmful to the girl child. As a significant and symbolic commitment to the advancement of women in Africa, at the commemoration of the fortieth anniversary of the Commission on the Status of Women, in April 1998, ECA organized an international conference on the theme "African women and economic development: investing in our future". The Conference brought together about 500 senior policy makers from Governments, non-governmental organizations, civil society, and subregional, regional and international organizations as well as some heads of State of African countries.

178. ECA has integrated the International Conference on Population and Development goals into its target areas of food, population and environment. ECA, together with UNDP, will be collaborating on specific United Nations Conference on Environment and Development and International Conference on Population and Development activities which will include joint studies, organization of policy seminars and workshops, and advocacy of environmentally sound development.

179. As an integral part of the follow-up to the World Summit for Social Development, ECA will be publishing a status report on poverty annually, and will convene a regional meeting as a follow-up to the Summit in Kenya in October 1998.

5. Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia

180. The principal priorities fostered by the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA) continued to guide its main function of promoting regional

development and cooperation. Thus, undertaking analytical studies in priority areas of global and regional concerns, including advancing the harmonization of norms, standards and legislative instruments in both the economic and social fields, formed the main thrust of ESCWA's work. Another main priority consisted of promoting integrated policies and strategies among ESCWA member States with regard to sectoral issues of regional significance as well as global issues with regional implications. Over and above the publication of economic and social statistics, the harmonization of statistical data and the promotion of international statistical standards at the regional level were a third priority area in the work of ESCWA. A fourth priority consisted in establishing complementarity between normative and analytical activities on the one hand, and operational activities on the other, whereby field projects, training courses and advisory services would present the operational dimension of normative activities and gave them further credence. These priorities were mainly served through a critical mass of activities launched during the biennium 1994-1995, when ESCWA witnessed major reform in the orientation of its programme of work, and continued through the bienniums 1996-1997 and 1998-1999 in an attempt to create cumulative impact through a series of interrelated multidimensional activities planned to be implemented in phases.

181. Thus, major analytical studies continued to address clusters of priority issues such as poverty, issues emanating from follow-up to the recommendations of global conferences, the impact of world economic arrangements and that of major regional developments, chiefly the peace process, and transport-related issues. Major developments in the region's economic and social arena were analysed through the *Survey of Economic and Social Developments in the ESCWA Region* for the year 1996-1997,²¹ which is a main multidisciplinary analytical activity undertaken by ESCWA. In conjunction with the *Survey*, a preliminary overview of socio-economic developments in the region for 1997-1998 was published. This was first introduced in 1996. The preliminary overview provides, in summary form, an early assessment of the socio-economic developments in the region and is aimed at assisting the policy makers by providing them with timely information and analysis. ESCWA is the only organization in the region that provides such a forecast.

182. The harmonization of norms, standards and legislative instruments in various sectors figured prominently in ESCWA's work during the past year. This is expected to be more pronounced in activities planned for the biennium 1998-1999, given that harmonization of norms is in the title

of one of the five thematic subprogrammes carried out by ESCWA. The subprogramme tackles coordination of norms and regulations in the sectors of industry, technology, transport and agriculture. In the area of transport, for example, which is not covered by any specialized United Nations agency, ESCWA had a major share of such activities since it provided regional guidelines for transport agreements and conventions, assessed intra- and interregional transport and infrastructure, and formulated policy and project proposals for the development of a multimodal transport system in the region. In 1998-1999, such activities will be augmented and discussed at an intergovernmental meeting on transport facilitation across borders. In the coming year, harmonization in the transport sector will transcend the regional dimension since it will attempt to address the application of UN/EDIFACT in ESCWA member States. The establishment of a committee on transport in the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia, through ESCWA resolution 213 (XIX) of 7 May 1997, reflects the importance of transport-related issues to ESCWA member States.

183. One of the chief examples of ESCWA's role in bridging global and national concerns and in promoting streamlined regional policies and strategies is reflected in the initiative that it took to launch a flagship project on integrated follow-up to global conferences at the regional level, which touches on all major issues addressed under ESCWA's subprogramme "Improvement of the quality of life". The project was presented to the Regional Inter-agency Coordination Group in Amman for consideration by concerned United Nations organizations, chiefly UNDP, UNFPA, UNICEF and UNIFEM. The project identifies cross-cutting issues in all recent United Nations world conferences and is predicated on the performance of ongoing activities of each agency in this regard and on a holistic approach that provides a comprehensive, multidisciplinary inter-agency framework for follow-up action. Follow-up to global conferences was institutionalized in ESCWA's programme of work for the biennium 1998-1999 through four regional preparatory meetings for the intergovernmental Arab conference on integrated follow-up to global conferences.

184. Another major multidisciplinary activity undertaken by ESCWA in relation to policy setting and analysis was the convening of a meeting entitled "Improving the standard of living in the Arab Mashreq countries" (November 1997), which constituted the second phase of a series of activities on eradicating poverty, initiated in 1994 through studies aimed at analysing the dimension and characteristics of poverty. These activities are expected to culminate towards

the end of the current biennium, in the identification of major poverty indicators and policy measures for poverty eradication. ESCWA has already taken a stride in this direction through the execution of two field projects including a community development project in Egypt and the Syrian Arab Republic, as well as a series of training courses in several ESCWA countries on launching of small and medium-sized enterprises, as practical mechanisms for eradicating poverty. A workshop on simulation exercises and learning labs, which drew on experience accrued in this area and explored modalities for improving and adapting training material, was also held (December 1997). Furthermore, to support networking in the area of poverty and other social development issues, an integrated information system on social policies and measures in the area of human development, gender, population and human settlements is being developed. In this respect, the normative and operational aspects of the poverty-related issues are being undertaken in a mutually supportive fashion.

185. Another major cluster of multidisciplinary analytical activities undertaken by ESCWA relates to the implications of the peace process on selected sectors and regional developments. A study and a meeting on the subject analysed changes that had already taken place in the industrial sector of selected ESCWA countries and attempted to assess future potentials resulting from a situation of progress towards peace. Opportunities and hazards involved in two industries, textiles and electronics, were also discussed. Activities under the umbrella of the implications of peace on the region will be complemented during the biennium 1998-1999 by activities in other areas addressing development of capital markets in ESCWA member countries' industrial sector; and cooperation in the agricultural sector of ESCWA countries in light of the peace process. In undertaking these studies, ESCWA is addressing a major regional development issue which it is best equipped to tackle owing to its proximity to the region and its multidisciplinary mandates.

186. ESCWA continues to undertake activities for the coordination, harmonization and development of statistical data. Apart from ongoing training activities to promote the use of international statistical standards and norms in the region, such as ICP, the new System of National Accounts (1993 SNA),²² and population and housing censuses, ESCWA launched, in 1997, an integrated statistical information system which includes an assessment of the status of statistics in ESCWA member countries. The first stage of this system involves organization and storage of statistical data in a centralized database which would permit a unified and sophisticated analysis of data generated for the

ESCWA member countries and other Arab countries. Eventually, this database would be made available, in multiple classifications, to outside end-users, thus providing a timely and detailed source of statistical information on the Arab countries, an activity not being undertaken by any other organization in the region.

187. In its resolution 214 (XIX), dated 7 May 1997, the Commission established the Technical Committee on Liberalization of Foreign Trade and Economic Globalization. This resolution reflects the emphasis put by ESCWA member States on the role of the Commission in addressing economic globalization issues and in providing a forum for policy debate of these issues. Recent activities included an expert group meeting on challenges and opportunities of the new international trade agreement (Uruguay Round) and post-Uruguay preparations and adjustments in selected sectors (November 1997). The primary aim of the meeting was to raise awareness in the region concerning the implications of the World Trade Organization on the future of trade in oil and oil-related industries in the region. Furthermore, in April 1998, ESCWA together with UNDP and UNCTAD, and with the participation of the League of Arab States, organized a meeting for ministers and senior Arab officials dealing with World Trade Organization issues within the framework of UNCTAD's technical assistance activities on challenges of integration of Arab countries into the multilateral trading system. The meeting provided a regional forum for discussion of issues related to World Trade Organization agreements, for sensitizing decision makers to the implications of the agreements for Arab countries, and for formulating initiatives for the consideration at the second World Trade Organization Ministerial Conference convened in May 1998 in Geneva. The critical mass of World Trade Organization-related activities are to be further pursued in 1998-1999 by exploring other aspects of the World Trade Organization agreements, namely, the impact of World Trade Organization Environment Committee decisions on trade in ESCWA member States and on intellectual property rights and services.

188. Another testimony of the importance of ESCWA as a regional forum for interaction and for policy formulation was the Commission's decision at its nineteenth session to convene the Committee on Water Resources annually instead of biennially (ESCWA resolution 212 (XIX), dated 7 May 1998). This was attributable to the significance of the issue of water in a region afflicted with water scarcity and to the fact that ESCWA is the sole institution in the region that deals with water-related issues in a comprehensive multidisciplinary manner. Within the framework of

strengthening regional cooperation in the area of water, ESCWA undertook a study on transboundary water resources in the ESCWA region: utilization, management and cooperation, which reviewed literature pertaining to ongoing and future plans to develop, manage and conserve water resources at the national, subregional and regional levels. The study also recommended guidelines and strategies for development and management of transboundary water resources. Another area covered was the development of non-conventional water resources and appropriate technologies for groundwater management in the ESCWA region, which involved an operational aspect of water management. Water pollution in urban areas in selected ESCWA countries was the subject of another study which took environmental concerns into consideration. Furthermore, as an operational arm of analytical activities on water-related issues, ESCWA is providing its member States with advisory services on a spectrum of activities and projects in this area. In recognition of the importance of such activities for the region, both France and Germany have made substantial contributions to support these operational projects.

189. ESCWA adopted follow-up to global conferences as the theme of the first meeting of the ESCWA Committee on Social Development (the intergovernmental specialized body) which was held in Amman, in March 1997. In addition, ESCWA was specifically asked by the League of Arab States and the Government of Jordan to participate as a member in the Steering Committee responsible for preparing the meeting of the Ministers of Social Affairs as a follow-up to Beijing.

190. Another major undertaking for ESCWA in the follow-up to world conferences relates to the area of statistics. The Commission is currently cooperating with its member States on the collection of statistical data required for identifying indicators for use in monitoring the implementation of recommendations emanating from world conferences.

191. The umbrella flagship project referred to above reflects ESCWA's efforts to translate global concerns and commitments emanating from recent global conferences into concrete concerted regional policies, programmes and activities, thus assisting in forging a regional perspective that bridges the gap between action at the national level and requirements at the global level. It also reflects ESCWA's efforts towards effective partnership with other United Nations agencies, especially those with operational mandates, such as UNDP, which mainly operates at the national level, and organizations with regional mandates mentioned above. It further reflects fruitful collaborative efforts between ESCWA and other non-United Nations

regional organizations, namely the League of Arab States. Both the League and ESCWA have cooperated in the past by holding regional preparatory meetings in preparation for participation in world conferences, and by promoting common regional positions. It is further expected that ESCWA and the League will jointly implement some of the activities identified in this project, which comprises both normative and operational activities that seek to identify mechanisms for monitoring follow-up action.

B. Interregional cooperation

192. Interregional cooperation has been a relatively ignored dimension of multilateral cooperation under the United Nations. However, its potential is now beginning to be better appreciated. Not that efforts were not made; however, those were mostly sporadic and isolated: they often faltered for lack of sustained interest or for want of funding support.²³ Cooperation was mostly limited to interactions between the secretariats of the regional commissions to learn from each other but, rarely, to pursue projects of mutual interest for any extended time (for example, please see E/1997/40, para. 212). Globalization, however, is reviving the interest in interregional cooperation. Countries are having to deal with problems of an unprecedented scope and complexity, and are required to look beyond national and regional boundaries and experiences. The renewed interest of member States in strengthening interregional cooperation calls for more in-depth reflection and policy guidance by the Economic and Social Council.

193. In one of their periodic meetings, held at Headquarters in New York from 10 to 12 March 1998, the executive secretaries of the regional commissions reviewed the developments taking place at the regional and global levels. They agreed that there are now more possibilities for effective interregional cooperation in view of the emerging interests of their respective membership in learning from experiences in other regions on economic and social issues, and in utilizing the regional commissions for that purpose. They identified some of the issues on which there seemed to be growing interest for interregional cooperation, such as the implication of the current Asian financial crisis; the aftermath of the Mexican financial crisis of 1994; management of financial flows; the relative experience of the integration groupings in promoting intraregional trade and investment; electronic commerce and trade facilitation in a globalizing world economy; privatization of public utilities; reform of the pension system; and intraregional and international migration flows. The General Assembly had in the past taken initiatives to sponsor programmes for transport and communication decades for Asia and the

Pacific which also covered the regions of Western Asia,²⁴ and for Africa.²⁵ The growing demands being made on the transport and communications systems by an ever-increasing volume of trade and flow of services call for reflections on whether these initiatives should be followed through so as to establish more effective interregional linkages covering those regions as well as extending to others.

194. Some of the initiatives for interregional cooperation would inevitably bring into consideration the adoption of international standards and norms, from which there is much to gain. The regional commissions have gained considerable experience in this area and can, as in the case of ECE, facilitate the dissemination of norms and standards outside a particular region.²⁶

195. A recent and concrete example of the need for interregional cooperation is illustrated by the wish of member States of the United Nations and ECE and ESCAP to establish fruitful interregional linkages while also strengthening the regional integration process, as manifested in the adoption on 26 March 1998 of the Tashkent Declaration on the United Nations Special Programme for the Economies of Central Asia (SPECA) (A/53/96, of 14 April 1998, annex II). The meeting which adopted the SPECA programme was attended by the heads of the States of Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan, as well as the Executive Secretaries of ECE and ESCAP, who participated by special invitation. The avowed objective of the programme is to support the Central Asian States in developing their cooperation, and creating incentives for economic development and integration into the economies both of Europe and Asia. Implementation of the programme will also closely involve, in addition to ECE and ESCAP, the United Nations resident coordinators in the concerned countries (A/53/96, annex II).

196. Interest has also been expressed by East European countries with respect to learning from the evolving democratization process in Latin America and its implications for economic and social policy-making. Areas of particular interest include the Latin American experiences in the privatization of social security and reform of their health-care management.

197. In terms of more concrete development, ESCAP, ECLAC and ECA have recently submitted two joint projects for funding by UNDP's Technical Cooperation among Developing Countries (TCDC) programme concerning the development of interregional cooperation and involving Asia and Latin America on the one hand and Asia and Africa on the other. UNDP has, in principle, agreed to support the projects.

Notes

- ¹ *Official records of the Economic and Social Council, 1997, Supplement No. 16* (E/1997/36), annex III.
- ² *Ibid.*, annex IV.
- ³ *Ibid.*, Supplement No. 18 (E/1997/38), chap. IV, resolution 53/1.
- ⁴ *Ibid.*; and E/ESCAP/1080.
- ⁵ *Official Records of the Economic and Social Council, 1998, Supplement No. 20* (E/1998/40); and E/ESCAP/1117.
- ⁶ *Ibid.*
- ⁷ Recent examples of this type of work can be found in the documents the secretariat presented to the twenty-seventh session of ECLAC, held in Aruba from 11 to 16 May 1998. See "The fiscal pact" (LC/G.2024) and "The impact of the Asian financial crisis in Latin America" (LC/G.2026).
- ⁸ *Official Records of the Economic and Social Council, 1996, Supplement No. 17* (E/1996/37), Chap. III, sect. F, resolution 553 (XXVI).
- ⁹ *Report of the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, Rio de Janeiro, 3-14 June 1992, vol. I, Resolutions Adopted by the Conference* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.93.I.8 and corrigendum), resolution 1, annex II.
- ¹⁰ *Report of the International Conference on Population and Development, Cairo, 5-13 September 1994* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.95.XIII.18), chap. I, resolution 1, annex.
- ¹¹ *Report of the United Nations Conference on Human Settlements (Habitat II), Istanbul, 3-14 June 1996* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.97.IV.6), chap. I, resolution 1, annex II.
- ¹² *Report of the Fourth World Conference on Women, Beijing, 4-15 September 1995* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.96.IV.3), chap. I, resolution 1, annex II.
- ¹³ United Nations publication, Sales No. E.97.II.F.8.
- ¹⁴ *Report of the World Summit for Social Development, Copenhagen, 6-12 March 1995* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.96.IV.8), chap. I, resolution 1, annex II.
- ¹⁵ A/AC.237/18 (Part II)/Add.1 and Corr.1, annex I.
- ¹⁶ *Report of the Global Conference on the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States, Bridgetown, Barbados, 25 April-6 May 1994* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.94.I.18 and corrigenda), chap. I, resolution 1, annex II.
- ¹⁷ United Nations publication, Sales No. E.97.II.G.13.
- ¹⁸ United Nations publication, Sales No. E/S.98.II.G.1.
- ¹⁹ United Nations publication, Sales No. E.98.II.G.3.
- ²⁰ United Nations publication, Sales No. E.97.II.G.11.
- ²¹ United Nations publication, Sales No. E.97.II.L.5.
- ²² *System of National Accounts, 1993* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.94.XVII.4).
- ²³ For instance, the Economic and Social Council adopted resolution 1989/118 of 28 July 1989 on interregional cooperation for facilitation of international trade in the implementation of which it sought to involve the regional commissions and UNCTAD, with funding support from UNDP.
- ²⁴ See General Assembly resolution 39/227 of 18 December 1984. In Paragraph 2 of that resolution, the Assembly also included the ESCWA region.

²⁵ See General Assembly resolutions 33/197 of 29 January 1979 and 43/179 of 20 December 1988.

²⁶ See discussion on the subject in document E/1997/40, paras. 212-216).

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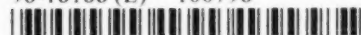
New York, 6-31 July 1998

Item 10 of the provisional agenda*

Regional cooperation**Regional cooperation in the economic, social and related fields****Report of the Secretary-General****Addendum****Matters calling for action by the Economic and Social Council or brought to its attention***Summary*

The present report contains resolutions and decisions adopted at the recent sessions of the regional commissions that call for action by the Economic and Social Council or are to be brought to its attention. The report covers the period between the Council's substantive sessions of 1997 and 1998. During the first half of 1998, three of the five regional commissions held their regular sessions: the Economic Commission for Europe held its fifty-third session at Geneva from 20 to 23 April 1998; The Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific held its fifty-fourth session at Bangkok from 16 to 22 April 1998; and the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean held its twenty-seventh session at Aruba from 11 to 16 May 1998. The Economic Commission for Africa, which holds its sessions on a biennial basis, did not meet in 1998; however, the Ministerial Follow-up Committee of the Conference of Ministers for Economic and Social Development and Planning met at Addis Ababa on 23 and 24 April 1998. The Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia, which holds its sessions on a biennial basis, did not meet in 1998.

* E/1998/100



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I. Matters calling for action by the Council

A. Economic Commission for Europe

1. At its fifty-third session, the Economic Commission for Europe (ECE) adopted one resolution requiring action by the Council.

DRAFT RESOLUTION

Review of the regional commissions by the Economic and Social Council

The Economic and Social Council,

Recalling General Assembly resolution 52/12 B of 19 December 1997, in which the Assembly requested the Economic and Social Council to conduct a review of the regional commissions,

Noting that the Economic Commission for Europe, at its fifty-third session, considered a note by the Executive Secretary on relations with other regional, subregional and global organizations and institutions¹ and a report on operational activities and cooperation with subregional groupings, interests and initiatives,²

Recalling the principles governing the relationship of the Economic Commission for Europe with other bodies as set forth in chapter IV of its Plan of Action,³

1. *Reaffirms* the need to strengthen cooperation between the Economic Commission for Europe and other bodies according to complementarities in terms of mandates, membership and approaches to issues of common concern;

2. *Stresses* that in order to ensure synergies and coherence, as well as to avoid duplication and inconsistencies, these relationships should be based on regular exchange of information in common areas of work and on mutual recognition and use of the expertise and experience available in each organization and should lead to joint activities, as appropriate;

3. *Emphasizes* the importance of dialogue among the secretariats of institutions and of consistent messages by Governments in different forums in order to maximize cooperation among institutions;

4. *Recognizes* that the Economic Commission for Europe has acquired over the years considerable knowledge of countries with economies in transition and has developed long-standing working relationships with those countries in the areas of its expertise;

5. *Stresses* that, in responding to the specific needs of the region, the Economic Commission for Europe has two core functions: the development and harmonization of legal instruments, norms and standards in its areas of expertise, and the production of statistics and analyses in those areas;

6. *Welcomes* the involvement of interested non-member States in the development and adoption of norms established by the Commission as well as the interest of other regions in using these norms and in adapting them to their concerns and needs;

¹ E/ECE/1362

² E/ECE/1359 and Corr. 1.

³ E/ECE/1347, see also *Official Records of the Economic and Social Council, 1997, Supplement No. 16* (E/1997/36), chap. IV, decision A (52).

7. *Emphasizes* that the technical assistance activities of the Commission are limited in scale and are undertaken in support of the functions mentioned in paragraph 5 above, and are directed in particular towards countries with economies in transition;

8. *Stresses* that the Commission also has the role of bringing the contribution of the region to the global level and facilitating the implementation of international commitments in the region with respect to its areas of work;

9. *Takes note* of the information on the relationships that the Economic Commission for Europe has built up with other organizations in its areas of cooperation.⁴

B. Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific

2. At its fifty-fourth session, the Commission approved the following draft resolution for action by the Council:

DRAFT RESOLUTION

Strengthening regional support for persons with disabilities into the twenty-first century

The Economic and Social Council,

Recalling its decision 1992/289 of 31 July 1992 on the Asian and Pacific Decade of Disabled Persons, 1993-2002,

Noting the implementation efforts made during the first half of the Decade by many countries and areas in the Asia and Pacific region, including progress in the adoption of equalization legislation, as well as the intercountry meetings hosted by the Governments of India, Japan, Malaysia and the Philippines on critical issues in the implementation of the Agenda for Action for the Asian and Pacific Decade of Disabled Persons, 1993-2002⁵ related to assistive devices, non-handicapping environments, multisectoral collaboration and national coordination,

Welcoming the Seoul Proposals for the Second Half of the Asian and Pacific Decade of Disabled Persons adopted by the Meeting of Senior Officials to Mark the Mid-point of the Asian and Pacific Decade of Disabled Persons, 1993-2002, hosted by the Government of the Republic of Korea in September 1997,

Expressing its appreciation to the Subcommittee on Disability-related Concerns of the Regional Inter-Agency Committee for Asia and the Pacific for pioneering collaborative inter-organizational action for the Decade,

Noting the need for a stronger regional impetus to support national and local endeavours in the second half of the Decade,

1. *Requests* the General Assembly to endorse the present resolution and to encourage intergovernmental organizations to support its implementation in order to assist in addressing equalization issues faced by the majority of the world's disabled persons, including disabled women and disabled children, who live in the Asia and Pacific region;

2. *Urges* all members and associate members of the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific:

⁴ See E/ECE/1359 and Corr. 1 and E/ECE/1362.

⁵ E/ESCAP/902, annex II.

(a) To intensify multisectoral collaborative action towards the fulfilment of the targets for the implementation of the Agenda for Action for the Asian and Pacific Decade of Disabled Persons, 1993-2002, adopted by the Commission at its forty-ninth session, in April 1993;⁶

(b) To contribute to the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific technical cooperation trust fund for the Decade to meet capacity-building needs for information and technical assistance in multisectoral collaboration among diverse sectors, in support of the fulfilment of the targets for the Decade;

3. *Further urges* all Governments that have not yet signed the Proclamation on the Full Participation and Equality of People with Disabilities in the Asian and Pacific Region⁷ to do so before the next regional meeting to review the progress of the Decade, to be held in 1999;

4. *Requests* the Executive Secretary of the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific to strengthen secretariat assistance to members and associate members by taking the following action:

(a) Harnessing the multidisciplinary potential of the secretariat of the Commission to enhance sensitivity to disabilities – that is, by the inclusion of persons with disabilities and/or the consideration of the impact of secretariat assistance on disability-related concerns – as a performance criterion of the secretariat's overall technical assistance, on a par with other criteria, such as gender sensitivity and relevance to development needs in the countries and areas of the region;

(b) Examining resource allocations within the secretariat, with a view to undertaking the adjustments required to enhance secretariat support for disability-related action;

(c) Mobilizing resources to continually replenish the technical cooperation trust fund for the Decade for the purposes of documentation, exchanges and field visits, and to disseminate good practices in the implementation of the Agenda for Action for the Decade, giving special attention to the enhancement of knowledge and skills among persons with disabilities and the equal participation of disabled women and girls;

(d) Generating practical guidelines for advancing equal access by disabled persons to mainstream development opportunities, by organizing and following up on two regional meetings in 1999, in close collaboration with other members of the Subcommittee on Disability-related Concerns, on the following topics:

(i) Education and technology for the specific needs of disabled children and youth;

(ii) Implementation of the United Nations Standard Rules on the Equalization of Opportunities for Persons with Disabilities and fulfilment of the targets for the Decade;

(e) Exploring the means of organizing, by the end of 2002, a high-level regional meeting to consider the lessons learned from national and area efforts towards the fulfilment of the targets for the Decade, so as to lay a solid foundation for the inclusion of persons with disabilities in mainstream society into the twenty-first century;

5. *Further requests* the Executive Secretary to report to the Commission biennially on the progress made in the implementation of the present resolution, with emphasis on

⁶ *Official Records of the Economic and Social Council, 1993, Supplement No. 16 (E/1993/36), chap. IV, resolution 49/6*

⁷ E/ESCAP/902, annex I

follow-up action to reinforce the impact of the above-mentioned regional meetings, and to submit recommendations to the Commission, as required, concerning continuous secretariat action to improve the opportunities for persons with disabilities to participate in the development process, until 2003, when the overall endeavours of the Decade will be reviewed as a separate agenda item at the fifty-ninth session of the Commission, to provide a basis for further action in the new millennium.

C. Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean

3. At its twenty-seventh session, the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean received an invitation from the Government of Mexico to hold its twenty-eighth session in that country, in the year 2000. On 16 May, the Commission adopted resolution 575 (XXVII), in which it accepted that invitation and recommended that the Economic and Social Council approve the holding of the Commission's twenty-eighth session in Mexico in the year 2000.

DRAFT DECISION

Venue of the twenty-eighth session of the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean

The Economic and Social Council, noting the adoption by the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean of resolution 575 (XXVII) of 16 May 1998 on the place and date of the twenty-eighth session of the Commission, decides to endorse the decision of the Commission to accept the invitation of the Government of Mexico to hold the twenty-eighth session of the Commission in Mexico in the year 2000.

D. Economic Commission for Africa

4. On the occasion of the fortieth anniversary of the Economic Commission for Africa, the Commission convened an International Conference on African Women and Economic Development, which took place in Addis Ababa, from 28 April to 1 May 1998. The ECA Ministerial Follow-up Committee of the Conference of Ministers for Economic and Social Development and Planning also met and approved two draft resolutions for adoption by the Council.

DRAFT RESOLUTION I

Relationships between the Economic Commission for Africa, United Nations agencies and regional and subregional organizations in Africa

The Economic and Social Council,

Recalling the terms of reference of the Economic Commission for Africa, as adopted by the Council in resolution 671 A (XXV) of 29 April 1958, and as amended in its resolutions 974 D I (XXXVI) of 5 July 1963, 1343 (XLV) of 18 July 1968 and 1978/68 of 4 August 1978,

Recalling also the various resolutions that have implications for the mandate and operations of the Commission including, in particular, General Assembly resolutions 32/197 of 20 December 1977 on the restructuring of the economic and social sectors of the United

Nations system, 33/202 of 29 January 1979, 44/211 of 22 December 1989 and 50/120 of 20 December 1995.

Recalling further Commission resolutions 718 (XXVI) of 12 May 1991 on the revitalization of the mandate and operational framework of the regional commission for Africa,⁸ 726 (XXVII) of 22 April 1992 on strengthening the Economic Commission for Africa to face Africa's development challenges in the 1990s,⁹ 779 (XXIX) of 4 May 1994 on strengthening the operational capacity of the Economic Commission for Africa¹⁰ and 809 (XXXI) of 8 May 1996 on new directions for the Economic Commission for Africa,¹¹

Bearing in mind General Assembly resolutions 45/177 of 19 December 1990 and 45/264 of 13 May 1991 on the restructuring and revitalization of the United Nations in the economic, social and related fields, as well as resolution 46/235 of 13 April 1992, in the annex to which the Assembly stated that the regional commissions should be enabled fully to play their role under the authority of the General Assembly and the Economic and Social Council, and that those located in developing countries should be strengthened in the context of the overall objectives of the restructuring and revitalization process,

Taking into account General Assembly resolution 52/12 B of 19 December 1997 entitled "Renewing the United Nations: a programme for reform", in which the Assembly invited the Economic and Social Council, in consultation with Member States and appropriate intergovernmental regional bodies, to conduct a general review of the regional commissions at its substantive session of 1998, bearing in mind the relevant provisions of Assembly resolution 50/227 of 24 May 1996 and the individual reviews each commission had already carried out, in order to consider the competencies of the regional commissions, taking into account the competencies of global bodies and other regional and subregional intergovernmental bodies,

Having examined the note by the secretariat of the Economic Commission for Africa entitled "Reform of the regional commissions: relations between the Economic Commission for Africa, United Nations agencies, regional and subregional organizations in Africa",¹²

1. *Welcomes* the note by the secretariat of the Economic Commission for Africa;
2. *Expresses its appreciation* of the observations and analyses contained in the note;
3. *Decides* to adopt the following recommendations:

Recommendation 1. Reaffirm and support existing coordination mechanisms at the regional level

An important first step in enhancing collaboration between the Economic Commission for Africa and the United Nations agencies is to reaffirm and support the team leadership role assigned to the regional commissions by the General Assembly in resolution 32/197. The agencies should use the mechanism of a regional administrative committee on coordination, first suggested in 1994 by the Secretary-General. The Economic and Social Council should consider providing a legislative directive to this effect. The regional administrative committee on coordination would be a useful mechanism for addressing a number of regional issues, including follow-up to the global conferences and programmes

⁸ *Official Records of the Economic and Social Council, 1991, Supplement No. 16 (E/1991/37), chap. IV.*

⁹ *Ibid.*, 1992, Supplement No. 13 (E/1992/33), chap. IV.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 1994, Supplement No. 20 (E/1994/40), chap. IV.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 1996, Supplement No. 35 (E/1996/35), chap. IV.

¹² E/ECA/MFC/2.

on post-conflict reconstruction developments in Africa. In this regard, the forthcoming meeting of the Conference of Ministers, to be held in 1999, should consider in-depth coordination and collaboration among United Nations agencies operating at the subregional and regional levels in Africa.

Recommendation 2. Adopt some principles for regional coordination

The United Nations agencies in Africa should adopt some principles for regional coordination. The agencies should endeavour to foster regional coordination on the basis of promoting greater exchange of information on planned and ongoing work; improve complementarities among programmes; draw on each other's competencies; and bring the pool of resources – financial and human – at their disposal to bear on policy issues of common interest.

Recommendation 3. Strengthen coordination at the subregional level

Coordination or collaboration among United Nations agencies in Africa should also be enhanced at the subregional level. At this level, this should take the form of the development of joint ventures to support the specific activities of countries in a subregional framework. In this way, the complementarities and harmony sought at the regional level will be given greater impact and impetus. The Subregional Development Centres of the Economic Commission for Africa should be an important vehicle for coordination at the subregional level.

Recommendation 4. The role of the Economic Commission for Africa in normative and operational functions

The Economic Commission for Africa, as a United Nations regional commission and as one of the regional institutions in the service of the development of Africa, has carried out valuable normative (analysis, advocacy, norm-setting) and operational activities that have been mutually complementary and supportive to the member States of the region. The Commission should continue to undertake both categories of activities, it being recognized that its technical assistance plays a catalytic role in translating its normative work into concrete support for the development efforts of member States.

Recommendation 5. Enhanced cooperation among African organizations

At the regional level, there is already implicit specialization and division of labour among Africa's three major intergovernmental organizations: the Organization of African Unity, the Economic Commission for Africa and the African Development Bank. There remains, however, a need to promote a more clear-cut division of responsibilities, and to rationalize and strengthen complementarities among the three organizations more strictly, according to their mandates and competencies, as a means of increasing their combined effectiveness, impact and efficiency in their collective mandate – to oversee the overall development of Africa at the regional level. This calls for these African organizations to strengthen their joint secretariat by implementing among themselves similar strategies as outlined above for the United Nations system. In particular, they should:

- (a) Strengthen coordination, including collaboration in programme development, planning of activities, monitoring and evaluation, geared to building upon and exploiting complementarities;
- (b) Improve networking and communications at all staff levels, not only at the level of chief executive;

(c) Work to establish a common ethos among their staff, based on a common perspective of Africa's political, social and economic development challenges and opportunities, and a common zeal to move Africa forward;

(d) Streamline and coordinate their intergovernmental machineries: the governing bodies of all African organizations could be required to summarize, in a joint report, their main decisions for submission to the Assembly of Heads of State and Government, of the Organization of African Unity, which is the supreme organ of the African Economic Community.

DRAFT RESOLUTION II

Revision of the medium-term plan, 1998-2001 of the Economic Commission for Africa

The Economic and Social Council,

Having considered the note by the secretariat of the Economic Commission for Africa on the "First revision to the medium-term plan, 1998-2001",¹³

Recalling Commission resolution 809 (XXXI) of 8 May 1996, in which the Commission endorsed the medium-term plan for the period 1998-2001, in the context of the new directions for the Economic Commission for Africa,¹⁴

Further recalling Commission resolutions 810 (XXXI) of 8 May 1996¹⁵ and 828 (XXXII) of 8 May 1997,¹⁶ in which the Commission called for the strengthening of the former Multinational Programming and Operational Centres and their transformation into Subregional Development Centres with an extended programme and policy orientation, as well as resolution 824 (XXXI) of 8 May 1996 entitled "Follow-up to the Dakar and Beijing Conferences: implementation of the global and regional platforms for action for the advancement of women",¹⁷

Endorses the revision to the medium-term plan, 1998-2001, involving the establishment of two new subprogrammes: "Promoting the advancement of women" and "Supporting subregional activities for development".

II. Matters brought to the attention of the Council

A. Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific

5. At its fifty-fourth session, the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific adopted five resolutions, which are brought to the attention of the Council.

Resolution 54/2. Manila Declaration on Accelerated Implementation of the Agenda for Action on Social Development in the ESCAP Region

6. The Commission endorsed the Manila Declaration on Accelerated Implementation of the Agenda for Action on Social Development in the ESCAP Region, as adopted at the

¹³ E/ECA/MFC.1/3.

¹⁴ *Official Records of the Economic and Social Council, 1996, Supplement No. 15 (E/1996/35), chap. IV.*

¹⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 1997, *Supplement No. 17 (E/1997/37), chap. IV.*

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 1996, *Supplement No. 15 (E/1996/35), chap. IV.*

Fifth Asian and Pacific Ministerial Conference on Social Development, on 11 November 1997. The Commission requested the Executive Secretary, in collaboration with all relevant bodies and agencies, to provide support for the effective implementation of the Declaration and to strengthen cooperation and collaboration in planning and programming for regional social development in that implementation. It further requested the provision of technical assistance to strengthen national capabilities for multisectoral and integrated social development planning and programming. It also requested the Executive Secretary to take measures to establish a Regional Inter-Agency Committee for Asia and the Pacific Subcommittee on the Regional Social Development Agenda. The Commission called for the convening of a regional meeting of senior officials in 1999 to review progress in the implementation of the preparations for the global review of the follow-up to the World Summit for Social Development by the General Assembly at its special session in 2000.

Resolution 54/3. Bangkok Declaration on Strengthening Regional Cooperation for Industrial and Technological Development in the Asian and Pacific Region and the Regional Action Plan for Industrial and Technological Development

7. The Commission endorsed the Bangkok Declaration on Strengthening Regional Cooperation for Industrial and Technological Development in the Asian and Pacific Region and the Regional Action Plan for Industrial and Technological Development adopted by the Meeting of Ministers of Industry and Technology, held in February 1998. The Commission called upon all relevant bodies, agencies and organizations, including members of the Subcommittee on Industry and Technology of the Regional Inter-Agency Committee for the Asia and the Pacific, to participate actively and effectively in the implementation of the Declaration and the Regional Action Plan. The Commission requested the Executive Secretary to undertake the preparation of a comprehensive study dealing with the implications of the current economic crisis in the region for the industrial and technological development process, and to conduct a mid-term review at the session of the Committee on Regional Economic Cooperation in the year 2000.

Resolution 54/4. Mobilization of human and financial resources for further implementation of actions to achieve the population and development goals of the ESCAP region

8. The Commission endorsed the outcomes of the High-level Meeting to Review the Implementation of the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development and the Bali Declaration on Population and Sustainable Development. The Commission requested the Executive Secretary, in cooperation with the United Nations Population Fund and other relevant organizations of the United Nations system to take appropriate steps to reorient the Asian and Pacific regional programme on population and sustainable development in accordance with the key future actions recommended by the High-level Meeting and to report on the implementation of the resolution at the Fifth Asian and Pacific Population Conference, planned for the year 2002.

Resolution 54/5. International Year of Older Persons: towards a society for all ages

9. The Commission reaffirmed its commitment to the fulfilment of the goals and targets contained in the Vienna International Plan of Action on Ageing, adopted by the World Assembly on Ageing in 1982, the Copenhagen Declaration on Social Development and Programme of Action of the World Summit for Social Development and the Agenda for Action on Social Development in the ESCAP Region. It urged all members and associate members to take early and effective action to make preparations for the International Year

of Older Persons designated by the General Assembly to be observed in 1999. The Commission called upon members and associate members to strengthen national mechanisms where necessary and for all concerned bodies, agencies and organizations to enhance their efforts to generate greater awareness of issues relating to ageing and older persons. The Commission requested the Executive Secretary to convene a regional meeting to formulate a plan of action on ageing in the Asian and Pacific region, in accordance with General Assembly resolution 50/141, and to continue to facilitate the exchange of national experiences and information and to disseminate data and materials concerning older persons. It further requested the Executive Secretary to report to the Commission, in 2000, on the observance of the International Year of Older Persons and on progress made in the implementation of the plan of action on ageing for Asia and the Pacific.

Resolution 54/6. Strengthening the role of the family in social development

10. The Commission invited its members and associate members to continue their activities to build family-friendly societies and urged them to plan for programmes and projects in a holistic manner and to strengthen multigenerational relationships. The Commission requested the Executive Secretary, in collaboration with concerned United Nations bodies and specialized agencies, as well as donor Governments and multilateral funding agencies, to continue to play an active role in facilitating regional cooperation within the framework of the follow-up to the International Year of the Family through exchange of information on effective policies and strategies and technical assistance, together with organizing subregional meetings and relevant research. The Executive Secretary was also requested to convene, within the current biennium, a regional workshop on strengthening the role of the family in providing social protection and to prepare and disseminate a publication on the topic and to report to the Commission, in 2000, on regional cooperation strategies to achieve a more focused and coordinated approach to the family within the United Nations system.

B. Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean

11. At its twenty-seventh session, held from 11 to 16 May 1998, the Commission adopted three resolutions of particular interest to the Economic and Social Council.

Resolution 564 (XXVII). The fiscal covenant: strengths, weaknesses, challenges

12. The Commission welcomed the main document presented by the secretariat, entitled "The fiscal covenant: strengths, weaknesses, challenges", deeming it a significant contribution to the study of recent trends in public finances and public sector management in the region, in particular because of the unifying concept of the "fiscal covenant" in the consideration of such trends. The Commission emphasized the relevance to such a covenant of the challenges of consolidating the fiscal adjustment now in progress, increasing the productivity of public management, enhancing transparency of fiscal actions, promoting the goal of equity in public revenue and expenditure and encouraging the development of democratic institutions. The Commission identified priority issues which required to be developed in greater depth by the secretariat, urging it to persevere in its study of the modernization of the public sector and the role of the State in the democratic process of changing production patterns with social equity.

Resolution 565 (XXVII). Reform of the United Nations and its impact on ECLAC

13. Recognizing that reform at ECLAC should continue to take place within the overall framework of reform in the United Nations, the Commission recommended that the reform measures be applied along the lines indicated in the note by the secretariat entitled "Reform of the ECLAC management system: delegation of authority and accountability". The Commission renewed the mandate of the Ad Hoc Working Group established pursuant to its resolution 553 (XXVI) and requested the Group to consider, in consultation with the Executive Secretary, the progress achieved in the implementation of current United Nations reform proposals pertinent to the Commission, and entrusted it with the preparation of a progress report to be submitted, through the Executive Secretary, to the Economic and Social Council at its resumed substantive session, for subsequent consideration by the General Assembly at its resumed fifty-second session.

Resolution 574 (XXVII). Participation of ECLAC associate member countries in the follow-up to United Nations world conferences, and in the work of the Economic and Social Council.

14. The Commission requested member countries to devise, through their representatives to the General Assembly, the necessary mechanism for the participation of associate members of ECLAC to enable them to participate in the special sessions of the General Assembly to review and appraise the implementation of the programmes of action of the International Conference on Population and Development, the Global Conference on the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States, the United Nations Conference on Human Settlements (Habitat II), the World Summit for Social Development and the Fourth World Conference on Women, and to participate in the preparatory processes related to the special session. The Commission also requested member countries to devise, through their representatives to the Economic and Social Council, the necessary mechanism for the participation of associate members of the regional commissions in the work of the Council and its subsidiary bodies.

Other resolutions adopted by ECLAC at its twenty-seventh session

15. Also at its twenty-seventh session, the Commission adopted resolutions endorsing the full incorporation of the Latin American Demographic Centre (CELADE) as a division of the Commission (resolution 569 (XXVII)); and supporting the work of the Latin American and Caribbean Institute for Economic and Social Planning (ILPES) (resolution 570 (XXVII)). It approved the work programme for the biennium 2000-2001 (resolution 566 (XXVII)), the calendar of conferences for the period 1998-2000 (resolution 567 (XXVII)) and the follow-up to the Regional Programme of Action for the Women of Latin America and the Caribbean, 1995-2001 (resolution 568 (XXVII)). The Commission also accepted the invitation of the Government of Peru to hold in that country the eighth session of the Regional Conference on Women in Latin America and the Caribbean in the year 2000.



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Regional cooperation

Regional cooperation in the economic, social and related fields

Report of the Secretary-General

Addendum

Letter from the Chairman of the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific at its fifty-fourth session to the President of the Economic and Social Council at its substantive session of 1998

The Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP), at its fifty-fourth session, held from 16 to 22 April 1998 at Bangkok, considered a report prepared by the ESCAP secretariat entitled "The role of ESCAP in the promotion of economic and social development in Asia and the Pacific: draft ESCAP position paper for review by the Economic and Social Council". The Commission requested its chairman to transmit a letter, together with the relevant portion of the report, to the President of the Council and to the Secretary-General of the United Nations.



Letter dated 18 May 1998 from the Chairman of the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific at its fifty-fourth session addressed to the President of the Economic and Social Council at its substantive session of 1998

In follow-up to the Secretary-General's recommendation and the General Assembly's subsequent decision that the Economic and Social Council, at its July 1998 session, should initiate a general review of the regional commissions, the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP), at its fifty-fourth session, held from 16 to 22 April 1998 at Bangkok, considered a report prepared by the ESCAP secretariat entitled "The role of ESCAP in the promotion of economic and social development in Asia and the Pacific: draft ESCAP position paper for review by the Economic and Social Council". At the conclusion of its consideration of that report, the Commission requested me, in my capacity as Chairman of the Commission, to transmit a letter, together with the relevant portion of the report, to the President of the Council and to the Secretary-General of the United Nations.

I would draw to your attention the continuing efforts of the Commission to review and to revise its conference structure, with the objective of rationalizing, streamlining and enhancing the efficiency and effectiveness of its work, to enable it better to tackle the complex development issues faced by the countries in the region into the next millennium. Particular reference is made to the Commission's resolutions 48/2 of 23 April 1992 and 53/1 of 30 April 1997 on restructuring the conference structure of the Commission and to relevant General Assembly resolutions.

In its discussion of ESCAP's continuing reform effort, the Commission emphasized certain areas for further action and, in particular, decided to:

- (a) Rationalize its work programme, based upon its core competencies;
- (b) Further strengthen project monitoring and self-evaluation of both ongoing and completed projects on a systematic basis;
- (c) Further reduce the percentage of resources devoted to programme support activities;
- (d) Within the work programme, redeploy resources from meetings and publications to technical assistance activities;
- (e) Promptly implement the recommendations of the Office of Internal Oversight Services.

In the course of its deliberations, the Commission voiced strong support for ESCAP's mandate as "team leader" for the United Nations system in the economic and social fields in Asia and the Pacific and its role as convener of the Regional Inter-agency Committee for Asia and the Pacific (RICAP). In consequence, the Commission invites the Council to direct the organizations of the United Nations system to respect the regional mandate of ESCAP in exercising team leadership and responsibility for coordination and cooperation at the regional level and its mandated role in technical assistance activities.

In bringing the above to your attention, may I invite you to disseminate, as an official document of the Economic and Social Council, copies of this letter to the members of the Council so that during its deliberations on the review of the regional commissions, full account may be taken of the genuine desire and continuing commitment of the members and associate members of ESCAP to pursue all possible courses of regional economic and social cooperation within the framework of the Charter of the United Nations. Furthermore, may I invite you to bring to the attention of the Council the concerns of the Commission

contained in the attached report and to make the necessary recommendations towards a Council decision that would enable the regional commissions effectively and efficiently to discharge their responsibilities.

(Signed) Surin Pitsuwan
Chairman of the Economic and Social Commission
for Asia and the Pacific at its fifty-fourth session

Annex

Follow-up to ESCAP resolution 53/1 of 30 April 1997 on restructuring the conference structure of the Commission

1. The Commission had before it document E/ESCAP/1083, which focuses on the restructuring of the conference structure of the Commission.
2. The Commission welcomed the measures taken so far on ESCAP reform. It reiterated that the process of reform was ongoing and should aim to sharpen the focus of work of the Commission, based on its comparative advantage, and to improve its ability to meet the evolving priority needs of the region efficiently and effectively.
3. The Commission noted that ESCAP had been engaged in the reform exercise over a considerable period of time. Those reform efforts needed to be pursued in the broader context of economic and social developments in the region and the Commission's ability to respond, in an adequate and timely manner, to emerging problems. In keeping with the times, ESCAP needed to continue adjusting itself to changing circumstances and conditions to ensure that it remained relevant and responsive to the needs of the membership.
4. The Commission emphasized the need to devise clearer objectives in the activities of ESCAP and to set time-frames to achieve those objectives. The regular monitoring and impact assessment capabilities of ESCAP needed to be strengthened. In addition, the results of the questionnaire on priorities and resource allocation should be reflected in the programme planning and budgeting process as soon as possible. The Commission recommended that the activities and services offered by ESCAP, and its success stories, be made more widely known, by both the secretariat and member Governments. It welcomed the revival of the ESCAP Publications Committee, which would serve to control the quality and quantity of publications under the regular budget, with a view to redeploying some resources to training and technical assistance activities.
5. The Commission noted the usefulness of the recent informal consultations of the Economic and Social Council at United Nations Headquarters, which had served to bring together the Executive Secretaries of the five regional commissions, and suggested that the information in respect of the reforms of the other regional commissions should be made available to ESCAP members. In response to a query concerning the implementation of the recommendations contained in the report of the Office of Internal Oversight Services on the regional commissions, the secretariat pointed out that the proposed revision to the medium-term plan for the period 1998-2001 would streamline the secretariat's programme structure to 7 subprogrammes from 10. The secretariat would be restructured to correspond to the revised programme structure. The secretariat informed the Commission of its effort to further reduce programme support costs, including the redeployment of posts from programme support areas to programme areas.
6. In endorsing the revised programme structure, the Commission emphasized the need to take into account the ongoing process of United Nations reform to avoid duplication by concerned organizations and to ensure greater complementarity in their programmes and activities. The possibility of holding sessions of some of the legislative committees every two years was also raised. The secretariat explained that any change to the conference structure would have to be discussed by members and associate members and approved by the Commission.

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7. The Commission had before it document E/ESCAP/1084, which examined the contribution of ESCAP to the region's economic and social development, the relations between ESCAP and its development partners, and the challenges facing ESCAP in preparing for its continuing role in the twenty-first century. It had been prepared by the secretariat in response to the Secretary-General's recommendation that the Economic and Social Council should initiate a general review of the regional commissions.

8. The Executive Secretary reported to the Commission that, at the informal consultations on the review of the regional commissions, held in New York on 12 March 1998, a number of pertinent outcomes had emerged. First, it had been recognized that the regional commissions had undertaken serious, broad-based reform but needed to respond further to changing circumstances within their respective regions. It had also been found that there was a need to establish better linkages between the regional commissions and the functional commissions of the Economic and Social Council, the Bretton Woods institutions, other regional groupings, civil society and the private sector. The three-way linkage between the regional commissions, delegations at United Nations Headquarters and Governments in the capitals also needed to be strengthened. There was a continuing need for a better balance between the operational role of the regional commissions and that of the other United Nations bodies and agencies. The consultations also concluded that the regional commissions had a role to play in the follow-up to global conferences and in the United Nations Development Assistance Framework.

9. The Commission found that document E/ESCAP/1084 gave useful background and guidelines and correctly highlighted the comparative advantage of ESCAP, particularly with respect to its interdisciplinary orientation. Strong support was voiced for the mandate of ESCAP as "team leader" for the United Nations system in the economic and social fields in Asia and the Pacific. The Commission also suggested that it should lead, or at least mirror, the reform taking place in the United Nations system. A number of delegations expressed their strong support for the Regional Inter-agency Committee for Asia and the Pacific and the role of ESCAP as convener and coordinator of that body. Particular value was accorded to the role of the Committee in avoiding unnecessary duplication and increasing the synergy and complementarity among the programmes of work of the respective entities. It was also pointed out that the coordination role of ESCAP should extend beyond the United Nations system to include other regional and subregional organizations in order to achieve optimal use of existing resources. That process could also serve to ensure that the most efficient division of labour among the various concerned entities would prevail. In that regard, while ESCAP should endeavour not to duplicate the mandates of other United Nations bodies and agencies, those organizations should, in turn, respect the regional mandate of ESCAP. Some delegations considered that the document reflected traditional arguments instead of providing a useful input for the review being undertaken by the Economic and Social Council as part of the reform in the United Nations system. The possibility of expanding the membership of the Regional Inter-agency Committee for Asia and the Pacific to include regional economic organizations was raised.

10. In considering operational activities, the Commission emphasized the need to continue forging strategic alliances between ESCAP and other United Nations bodies and agencies, and with other relevant organizations in the region. The Commission emphasized that resources, including regular budget resources, should be directed more to operational

activities than to meetings and publications. In order to define more clearly the priorities of the Commission's work programme, it was urged that members and associate members who had not yet done so should complete the questionnaire on resource allocation which had been circulated by the secretariat in February 1997. That was considered especially important in view of the current decline in extrabudgetary funding, which had in the past been a major source of support for the Commission's operational activities. With further reference to operational activities, it was suggested that non-governmental organizations should be given more opportunities to participate in the Commission's technical assistance projects.

11. The Commission expressed the view that members and associate members should make a greater effort to coordinate and exchange information between their representatives at the regional level and their counterparts at United Nations Headquarters in order to increase understanding of the role of ESCAP and the nature of its reform process, given its remote location from New York. In addition, such improved coordination could assist in identifying more precisely the requirements of the Commission with respect to the regular budget allocation and to ensure that decisions made in New York would be relevant to the real needs at the regional level. It was suggested that the Commission should take into account the reforms being conducted by other regional commissions to assist with the ESCAP reform process.

12. At the conclusion of the debate, the Executive Secretary explained that inputs from all of the regional commissions, including the finalized version of document E/ESCAP/1084, would be consolidated in the report of the Secretary-General for review by the Economic and Social Council at its July 1998 session. The Commission felt strongly that it would be useful for its views on the reform of ESCAP to be presented directly to the members of the Council and expressed concern that the contents of the ESCAP position paper might be diluted by being incorporated in the consolidated report. It was therefore agreed that the Chairman of the Commission would be invited to transmit to the Secretary-General and the President of the Council a letter detailing the views and concerns of the Commission.